William Wordsworth

THE PRELUDE

BOOK I AND II

ITAB MAHAL
URDU BAZAR, LAHORE.

ڈھونڈو گے اگر ملکوں ملکوں ملنے کے نہ

نایاب ہیں ہم

تعبیر ہے جس کی حسرت

اے ہم نفس وہ خواب ہیں ہم

ڈھونڈو

اے درد بتا کچھ تو ہی پتہ اب تک حل نہ ہوا

ہم میں ہے دل بے تاب نہاں یا ہم دل بے تاب ہیں

ڈھونڈو

حسرت و حسرت کا مارا خاموش کھڑا ہوں ساحل پر

دریائے محبت کہتا ہے آ کچھ بھی نہیں پایاب ہیں ہم

کچھ مسافر ہیں منزل پہ پہنچنے والے ہیں دو ایک

اے اہل زمانہ قدر کرو نایاب نہ ہوں کم یاب ہیں ہم

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1

Introduction to William Wordsworth

> "It may be that his manly chant, beside
> More dainty numbers, seems a rustic tune ;
> It may be thought has broadened since he died
> Upon the century's noon ;
> Enough that there is none since risen who sings
> A song so gotten of the immediate soul,
> So instant from the vital fount of things
> Which is our source and goal." —William Watson

(A) LIFE AND WORKS

Born 1770, at Cockermouth, his boyhood was happy ; he could roam among the fields of his beloved country side, in company with Nature and the books he loved (see *The Prelude*). Sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, 1787, but subsequently, attracted by the hopes born of the French Revolution, lived for some while in France returning in 1792 : Subsequently settled down (with his sister Dorothy and Coleridge) at Alfoxden ; but for the last fifty years of his life lived first at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, and finally at Rydal Mount. He married in 1802. Appointed to a sinecure office, bringing in an income of £ 500 a year, in 1813. Poet Laureate 1843. Died 1850.

1798 "Lyrical Ballads." This contained not only the noble *Tintern Abbey* lines (one of Wordsworth's noblest efforts), but also Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner.* In 1800 a second and enlarged edition of the book was published, with a valuable preface, containing an outline of his "poetical theory", Among the new poems were "Lucy", "The Fountain", "Matthew", "Nutting", all characteristics of Wordsworth's genius.

1807. **Poems in two Volumes**, containing ballads, short poems, sonnets, the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, one of the very greatest poems of the century, the *Ode to Duty* and the *Happy Warrior* lines. In these two volumes we have Wordsworth at the zenith of his powers.

1814. "The Excursion". Wordsworth's longest poem (largely autobiographical); full of discussion on man, on nature, and on human life. *The Recluse* and *The Prelude* were published after the poet's death. To this year belongs the fine classical study *Laodamia*.

1820-35. Many of his *Sonnets* were written during these years; but his magnificance patriotic sonnets belong to the period **1802-11**.

(B) MAIN CHARACTERSTICS OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

(*i*) WORDSWORTH'S TREATMENT OF NATURE

As a poet of Nature, Wordsworth stands supreme. He is "a worshipper of Nature": Nature's devotee or high-priest. Nature occupies in his poems a separate or independent status and is not treated in a casual or passing manner. *Tintern Abbey* is a poem with Nature as its theme.

Wordsworth pursues Nature in a way different from that of Pope. Unlike Pope, Wordsworth sincerely believed that in town life and its distractions men had foregotten nature and that they had been punished for it. Constant social intercourse had dissipated their energy and talents and impaired intercourse had dissipated their energy and talents and impaired the susceptibility of their hearts to simple and pure impression. One of his sonnets is elocuent of this idea :

> "The world is too much with us : late and soon, Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers ; Little we see in Nature that is ours",

Wordsworth brings a new and intenser interest in Nature. Pope looks at Nature as objectively as possible, naturally his view is hardly coloured by his 'hyper-individualism'. It has been stated that the antithesis to Pope's idea of Nature is hyper-individualism. Interestingly enough, Wordsworth's explorations of what Nature had to say to him spring from his 'hyper-individualism'. Thus, with Wordsworth the poetry of Nature took on a new range, passing beyond sensuous presentation and description to vision and interpretation. Under the influence of Nature, he experiences a mystic mood, a transcendental feeling.

Four Stages of Wordsworth's love of Nature

First stage

He loved the outward appearances of Nature, her grandeur in colour and beauty, her form and external features like many other poets of his own and subsequent ages ; and with the precision and faithfulness of a lover, he described her form, and experienced a child-like joy in simple describing the details of the features of Nature with wonderful accuracy ; 'the periwinkle trails its wreaths,

through primrose tufts ; the celandine is muffled 'up in close self-shelter' ; the green linnet 'is a brother of the dancing leaves' ; the tuft of hazel trees 'twinkles to the gusty breeze' ; he heard the two fold song of the cuckoo, he saw the beauty of the 'moon that bares her bosom to the sea.

Second stage

But the external features of the land, the sea, the sky, the sun, and the moon, were not all the sources of joy to him. "Wordsworth is one of the world's most loving, penetrative, and thoughtful poets of Nature. He found much of his greater joy in the presence of her calm, her beauty, her external revelations of a Divine hand. For Nature possesses a soul, a conscious existence, an ability to feel joy and love". In the *Lines Written in Early Spring*, he says :

"And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes".

In the *Immortality Ode*, he incorporates this belief in the lines :

"The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare".

Third stage

But what was more, he not only conceived that Nature was alive ; "it had, he imagined, one living soul, which entering into flower, stream or mountain, gave them each a soul of their own. Between this spirit in nature and the mind of man there was pre-arranged harmony which enabled nature to communicate its own thoughts to man, and man to reflect upon them, until an absolute union between them was established."

And it was his belief that man makes himself miserable by tearing himself away from the heart of Nature,—by waging a foolish strife with Nature :

"But we are pressed by heavy laws—*The Fountain*.

Fourth stage

This brooding communion with Nature brought him much wealth of moral illustration ; and this he communicated in poetic language for the benefit of the spiritual side in the human nature. The poet-philosopher considered it a mission of his life to be teacher of mankind. Many of the smaller poems written with the avowed object of teaching mankind the truth that his subjective contemplation revealed to his own mind ; such are the *Lesser Celandine*, *The Fountain*, *Two April Mornings*

Main aspects of Wordsworth's treatment of Nature

Wordsworth had a complete philosophy of Nature. Four points in his creed of Nature may be noted : (*a*) He conceived of Nature as a living personality. He *believed that there is a divine spirit per-*

vading all the objects of Nature. This belief finds a complete expression in the *Tintern Abbey* when he tells us that he has felt the presence of a sublime spirit in the setting sun, the round ocean, the living air, the blue sky, the mind of man, etc. This spirit, he says, rolls through all things :

> **A motion and a spirit, all objects of all thought rolls all things.**
> **The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the**
> **guardian of my heart, and soul of all moral being.**

This belief in a divine spirit pervading all the objects of Nature is called Pantheism.

(*b*) Next, Wordsworth believed that the company of Nature gives joy to the human heart. In *Tintern Abbey* he expresses the joy he feels on revisiting a scene of Nature. Not only is the actual sight of this scene pleasing. The very memory of this scene has in this past, soothed and comforted his mind, he gained "Sweet sensations" from these objects of Nature in hours of weariness. Nature is a healing influence on troubled minds as he tells his sister. Wordsworth looked upon Nature as exercising a healing influence on sorrow-stricken hearts.

(*c*) Above all, Wordsworth emphasized the moral influence of Nature. He spiritualised Nature and regarded her as a great moral teacher, as the best mother, guardian and nurse of man, as an elevating influence. He believed that between Man and Nature there is spiritual intercourse. According to him, Nature deeply influences human character. In *Tintern Abbey* he tells his sister Dorothy that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her" ; that Nature can impress the human mind with quietness and beauty ; that Nature gives human beings lofty thoughts. He advises Dorothy to let the moon shine on her and the winds blow on her, *i.e.*, to put herself under Nature's influence.

In his eyes, "Nature is a teacher whose wisdom we can learn if we will, and without which any human life is vain and incomplete." He believed in the education of Man by Nature. In this he was somewhat influenced by Rousseau. This interrelation of Nature and Man is very important in considering Wordsworth's view of both. In *Tintern Abbey* he also distinguishes his love for Nature as a boy from his love for her as a man. As a boy, his love for Nature was a physical passion ; as a grown-up man his love for Nature is intellectual or spiritual. As a boy, Nature was an "appetite, 'with' its aching joys and dizzy raptures ;" as a man his love is thoughtful because of the still, sad music of humanity which he has heard.

In the *Immortality Ode* also he tells us that as a boy his love for Nature was a thoughtless passion but now the objects of Nature

take "a sober colouring" from his eyes and give rise to profound thoughts in his mind because he had witnessed the sufferings of humanity :

> To me the meanest flower that blows can give, thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

(*b*) Wordsworth's attitude to Nature can be clearly differentiated from that of the other great poets of Nature. He did not prefer the *wild and stormy aspects of* Nature like Byron, or the *shifting and changeful aspects* of Nature and the scenery of the sea and sky like Shelley, or the *purely sensuous* in Nature like Keats. It was his special characteristic to concern himself, not with the strange and remote aspects of the earth and sky, but Nature in her *ordinary, familiar, everyday moods.* Nor did he recognize the *ugly side of Nature ;* Nature 'red in tooth and claw as Tennyson did. Wordsworth is to be distinguished from the other poets by the stress he places upon the *moral influence of Nature* and the need of man's *spiritual intercourse* with her.

(*ii*) WORDSWORTH'S PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINE OF NATURE

The philosophical content of *The Prelude* is made largely of Wordsworth's doctrine of Nature, which is outlined and repeated in other poems also—especially in the *Tintern Abbey* and Lucy's education of nature. It has been rightly pointed out the Wordsworthian philosophy of Nature, with its emphasis upon the divinity of Nature, Nature's holy plan, the one life in the Universe and in Man, the joy in the widest commonalty spread and Nature as a source of wisdom and moral health etc, was derived from the current speculations of the day, to which poets, philosophers and scientists had contributed alike. Wordsworth took these tenets from the deep-rooted convictions of the day and gave them the authenticity of personal experience and the vitality of the poetic expression. Keats has rightly stated that the conventional proverbs, precepts and dogmas of religion are meaningless to us until they are tested on our pulse, come home to our business and bosom and have become the formative influences in our moral and spiritual life. This is actually what Wordsworth has confessed in so many words, on so many occasions. There is, therefore, little force in the observation of Arnold and others, including Morley and Raleigh, that the philosophy or doctrine of Nature in the poetry of Wordsworth is an illusion. As a matter of fact Wordsworth regarded himself with Coleridge as a philosophical poet and his philosophy according to his own confessions, was hewn out of his own experiences and entitled him to the position of the teacher of society which he was anxious to achieve and maintain.

The basic principle of this doctrine is the unity of man and Nature as partakers in one and the same life, which meant a pre-ordained harmony between the two. Nature was animated by a soul

which was the 'Eternity of thought', wisdom, love, joy and 'the central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation.' Every object in Nature was alive and full of joy and energy, subsisting in perfect love and concord and waging no strife with other objects as is unfortunately the case with the human individual and multitudes.

Nature, thus, is best fitted for the position of man's teacher; she brings 'sweet love' as contrasted with the bookish knowledge which is an 'endless strife'. Hence Wordsworth stresses the necessity of 'wise passiveness', the attuning of the mind to the mood of nature so that the whole scene may sink into it or the mind may drink in the influence like a child at the breast of the mother. Thus, it follows that influences of 'deeper birth' are likely to come in solitude.

Nature was 'both law and impulse' with powers to kindle and restrain [illegible] so that her beauty and fear were equally necessary for the growth of the poet's mind. *The Prelude* in its early part is mostly occupied with the growth of the moral sense affected by Nature's ministration of fear in the young poet. But as the story proceeds the picture of the changing pattern of relationship between the poet's mind and Nature is clearly unrolled. The four stages distinctly marked in the *Tintern Abbey* are present in the *The Prelude* also and have been described by Prof. Dowden as those of blood, senses, heart or imagination and spirit. The first is the stage of childhood when he either 'bounded as a fawn' unmindful of Nature or received suggestions through fear inspired by her. The second stage covers boyhood and youth when his heart awakened to the loveliness of nature and 'sounding cataracts haunted him' like a passion and the form and colour of the objects absorbed his whole heart. But as he advanced in life and came face to face with the suffering of humanity, especially during his stay in France. The 'wild joys and giddy raptures of youth' mingled with the melancholy note of experience :

> The still sad music of humanity
> Nor harsh, nor grating but with ample
> Power to chasten and subdue.

Being spread in the whole universe, which is described in the *Tintern Abbey* in the grand but well-known passage, as something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of the setting sun and the wide ocean, and the living air and in the mind of man, a spirit and motion which moves all thinking things and all objects of all thought, and 'rolls through all things'.

This was Pantheism, the identification of God with Nature, which was anti-Christian. As Wordsworth advanced in age and his revolutionary fervour declined into the sober light of orthodoxy he began to re-examine the early version of *The Prelude* (1806) in order to make its doctrine more conformable to the Christian sentiment.

The pantheistic passage in *The Prelude*, therefore, is immediately followed by verses which place God, the Uncreated, above and beyond His creation, so that the objects of Nature are made to look up to Him and sing the one song' of thanks and glorification of his mercy and might.

The final position reached in *The Prelude* is a further modification of Pantheism. Growth of mind mean the growth of Imagination, which is at once 'the amplitude of mind, and Reason in her most exalted mood' and an aspect of Love and intellectual sympathy of thought soaked in feeling. The great mind with its full-grown imagination faces Nature, a reservoir of beauty, power and energy and the exquisite 'wedding' of the two is productive of the best and greatest poetry.

This partnership between Mind and Nature is based upon 'mutual domination' which means that sometimes the mind can change and transfigure nature by its own energy and imagination, but on other occasions it is caught by the spontaneous beauty and grandeur on the face of Nature, as angels are caught by the higher harmony of heaven as they enter the celestial domain after their journey through the other regions in the sky.

The difference from the transcendental philosophy finally adopted by Coleridge is quite apparent. In this philosophy nature is made alive by the mind of man and the 'object' become at one with the subject, it is a philosophic 'monism', while the Wordsworthian doctrine is based on 'dualism', the entities of mind and Nature are wedded together but not fully identified, each retaining its separate strength to modify and colour the other.

(*iii*) WORDSWORTH'S PANTHEISM

But the greatest contribution of Wordsworth to the poetry of Nature is his unqualified *Pantheism*. He believes that God shines through all the objects of Nature, investing them with a celestial light—"a light that never was on sea or land." He "finds Him in the shining of the stars he "marks Him in the flowering of the fields". This immanence of God in Nature gives him mystic visions. Nature is no longer a mere vegetation. Subject to the law of growth and decay ; not a collection of objects to be described but a manifestation of God. Nature is a Revelation and Wordsworth is the prophet.

Wordsworth came to believe that beneath the matter of universe there was a soul, a living principle, acting, even thinking, it may be living, at least, speaking to him, communicating itself to him :

> In all things, in all natures, in the stars.
> This active principle abides, from link to link,
> It circulates the soul of all the worlds.

(*iv*) WORDSWORTH'S MYSTICISM

Aubrey de Vere speaks of Wordswroth as a mystic. Indeed, his mysticism is such a fundamental and pervading element in his poems that it must be considered very carefully. Wordsworth believes that God pervades the entire Universe—both animate and inanimate. It is in the thought of God that the Universe exists, and its life is in God's thought. Not only that—the life in every flower, bud, insect, and the mossy stone on the hillside is a part of the Divine Life. As such, Nature (and every object in it) has a life of its own. And it is even conscious of it. That is why Wordsworth, in all his moods of inspired ecstasy or calm contemplation, is thrilled through and through with the sense of some inscrutable presence in Nature to which the soul of a man is linked by some mysterious bond of connection :

I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky. and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

(*v*) WORDSWORTH AS A POET OF MAN

Wordsworth was not only the poet of Nature, he is also the poet of Man. "It is by his close and loving penetration into the realities and simplicities of human life that he himself makes his claim on our reverence as a poet." He relates in *The Prelude* how he has been led through love of Nature to honour men. The love of Nature leads him to the love of Man.

In many of his poems, his efforts have been to show that the keynote of all life is to enjoy happiness—happiness, not as the result of chance or circumstance, but as sometimes to be won by work, sacrifice, service, or patience. *He always chooses for his heroes and heroines, not famous men and women stupefied by victory and intoxicated with glory and power, but humble peasants, innocent farmers, artless shepherds, lonely reapers, and highland girls, and shows that in their commonplace careers there is ample material to move the soul.*

Wordsworth's poetry of man can be considered in two ways : (a) his poetry of Man in relation of Nature, and (b) his poetry of Man in relation to human society.

As a poet of village life

Worsworth liked to represent simple village folk in the natural setting, and to describe how in the midst of their sorrows and wants, they would be consoled by Nature. He glorified village life because the villager lived so close to Nature and communed with her daily.

He found in the average village a dignity, a strength and courage and a sense of self-respect which he did not find among the town's folk.

As a poet of childhood

Wordsworth had his own peculiar way of looking at childhood. He was not much interested in the play of children but *he glorified childhood in the abstract.* The beauty of children makes him glad, but he never rests there. "He reads mysterious revelations in the child's innocence ; its 'fancies' are 'brought from afar' . . . ; it is the 'father of the man', the 'seer'. 'Haunted for ever by the eternal mind' (*Immortality Ode*). The root of this feeling was Wordsworth's memory of his own childhood, so ordinary in its incidents, so marvellous in its emotions . . . He regarded his mature imagination as faintly following out the traces of these boyish vision. *The child-life is the hiding-place of man's power* where man must seek it with all his mature faculty". This thought is giver a magnificent expression in his *Ode on the Intimations of Imn. tal*

"Return to Nature" and Wordsworth

"Return to Nature" was Wordsworth's motto : . . . . . saw little distinction between the soul of Nature, and the uncorrup. ed, unsophisticated soul of man, Nature, as existing in the heart oi man, was an object of his close attention. He was a realist and dealt boldly with substantial things "It is by his close and loving penetration into the realities and simplicities of human life that he himself makes his claim on our reverence as a poet. The love of nature led him to the love of man. It was exactly the reverse order to that of the previous poets. His interest in the simple and ordinary types of humanity is illustrated by his treatment of their simple joys and sorrows, their thoughts and afflictions, their general goodness and their daily interest. Simon Lee, Margaret, Poor Susan, the Schoolmaster Matthew, the Highland girl attracted him at isolated points of Spiritual illumination'. His interesting study of and mystic faith in the glories of childhood are but a natural corollary of his keen interest in the simplicities, virtues and goodness of uncorrupted humanity. "His children are rarely touched with the exquisite tenderness of Coleridge, but with a kind of solemn joy, pass often into mystic awe. He reads mysterious revelations in the child's innocence ; its fancies are 'brought from afar' ; its 'carols are fitted to unutterable thought' ; 'it is father of the man', the seer haunted for ever by the Eternal Mind".

The mystic conception of Man

To this natural philosophy of Man, Wordsworth adds a mystic element, the result of his own belief *that in every natural object there is a reflection of the living God. Nature is everywhere transfused and illuminated by Spirit ; man also is reflection of the divine spirit and we shall never understand the emotions roused by a flower or a sunset*

until we learn that Nature appeals through the eye of man to his spirit. In a word, Nature must be "spiritually disconcerned". In *Tintern Abbey* the spiritual appeal of Nature is expressed in almost every line : but the mystic conception of man is seen more clearly in "Intimations of Immortality", which Emerson calls "the high-water-mark of poetry in the nineteenth century." In this splendid Ode, Wordsworth adds to his spiritual interpretations of Nature and Man the alluring doctrine of pre-existence, which has appealed so powerfully to the Hindus, and which makes of human life a continous, immortal thing, without end or beginning.

(*vi*) WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF POETIC DICTION

In his preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth thus sets forth his aims. "The principal object proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout in a selection of the language really used by men, and at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect". He goes on to say that "humble and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their maturity, realism under restraint and speak a plainer and more emphatic language.' In the above statement we get these important points regarding Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction.

Firstly, in the choice of subjects or themes Wordsworth goes straight to common life, and, by preference to humble and rustic life (*Cf- Michael, The Solitary Reaper*).

Secondly, Wordsworth describes his themes taken from humble and rustic life as far as possible in a selection of language, actually, used by ordinary men. He does not look with favour upon the pompous and stilted circumlocution of the eighteenth century writers who delighted in using gaudy language.

Thirdly, Wordsworth says that while choosing his themes from common and rustic life and describing them in the language of the common people, his object is to "throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination, whereby ordinarily things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect".

(*vii*) WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF LANGUAGE AND POETIC DICTION

Wordsworth held certain theories of language and poetic diction which deeply influenced his work. He disliked intensely the artificial diction employed by the 18th century poets. Loving as he did Nature and the simple ways of rustics who hourly communed with the beautiful objects of Nature, was a better medium for poetry than the learned language and conventional diction employed in the poetry of the age. In his famous *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, he

enunciated his theories. He said that he was going to use "a selection of the language really used by men", and this chiefly "in humble and rustic life," and "at the same time to throw over (the incidents described) a certain colouring of imagination". He also said that "there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and verse."

Wordsworth occasionally violates his theory

In actual practice, whenever Wordsworth tried to imitate the simplicity of rustic speech, he produced some of his worst effects. In some of his poems he cultivates simplicity of diction no doubt, as he does in his *Solitary Reaper*. But even in that poem the diction is touched with imagination so that we have suggestive lines. The diction of *Immortality Ode* and *Tintern Abbey* is not simple, and does not come anywhere near the language of prose. In his practice Wordsworth did not follow the theory he enunciated. His poetic instinct saved him from that blunder. Although it must be admitted that, *on the whole*, Wordsworth is more simple in diction and more sparing *in* the use of imagery than the other Romantic poets.

(*viii*) MORAL VALUE OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

Wordsworth's poetry is characterised by a restrained *yet* undaunted optimism. He holds that life, despite its manifold evils is yet good and worth living. The evils themselves are stepping-stones to good. Our virtues are developed through suffering. Man is not alone in the world, nor alone is his suffering, because God is always and everywhere present to protect and support him. Man can rise above his suffering by calling to his aid his own moral strength and the resources of Divine Providence. Faith in God, and faith in a glorious human destiny—this is the solution of the problem of earthly life. It is a creed full of lofty spiritualism and Wordsworth could justifiably claim that his poetry would cooperate with the benign tendencies in human nature in making man nobler, purer and better.

(*ix*) WORDSWORTH : THE TEACHER "A TEACHER OR NOTHING"

Wordsworth once said, "Every great poet is a teacher I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing ; It appears therefore that Wordsworth wrote poetry more in order to teach than to answer the urge of his poetic soul. But this is only one side of the truth about the poetical work of Wordsworth. Though his aim was to teach, yet he was pre-eminently a poet. He combines, as every poet does, the functions of a poet and a teacher. How does a poet teach ? He teaches not by giving out moral precepts and maxims, as a moralist or a theologian does ; he teaches by present-

ing before the world a new vision of life. He sees beyond the surface things, and the truth which he perceives and realises, he expresses in his own way. Every great poet reveals a new aspect of truth, which his contact with life has revealed to him. He finds something which no body else has found before ; he discovers a new beauty, a new wonder in the common facts of life ; he beholds it with joy and communicates it to the world. This new vision that the poet discloses is not only beautiful and glorious, but provides to us a new angle from which to look at life. It is like clearing our blurred sigh and exciting our dull minds. And because the poet speaks in the language of feeling, his poetry penetrates deep into our hearts, and refines our feeling. He does not educate the mind so much as he elevates the soul. He does not teach as the school-master does—moves the springs of feeling, the emotion and thus raises the moral and spiritual level of mankind. Where Wordsworth *consciously and deliberately* teaches, his poetry flags and becomes dull and prosaic ; where he presents his vision of life, his teaching is merged in his poetry, which thrills and inspires.

(*x*) AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENT IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

Every great poet expresses through his work his imaginative vision of life, and the quality af his poetry depends upon the depth and range of his vision. And this vision of the poet is the most essential quality of himself ; apart from his vision, he is like any other man, and to this vision he gives a poetic vesture. This is his real and essential poetry.

The three great poems which are distinctly and frankly autobiographical and *Lines composed above Tintern Abbey*, (*1798*), *The Prelude* (*1799-1805*), and *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* (*1806*). Besides these three poems there are many others, like the Matthew poems, *Ode to Duty*, *Peele Castle*, some sonnets and probably the Lucy poems-which have an autobiographical interest and reveal the mind and personality of the poet. Wordsworth is always subjective in his treatment of nature and man : his lyrics are all self-revealing. But there are some poems, like those mentioned above, in which the poet either describes his life and experiences or directly reveals some aspect of his personality.

(*xi*) DEFECTS OF WORDSWORTH'S POETR Y

The inequality of his production. Wordsworth's inspiration was in bursts. There are magnificent passages in his poetry, but at times one comes across such lines as are devoid of all inspiration. The poet who could write with a fine austere reserve :

> "She is dead,
> The light extinguished of her lonely hut,
> The hut itself abandoned to decay,

Could also perpetrate these lines about a grave :

> I've measured it from side to side,
> It is three feet long and two feet wide",

The poet who could pen such a line as :

> The silence that is in the starry sky".

Could suffer this line without a qualm :

> The silent heavens have going on".

Prolixity. "It cannot be denied that in Wordsworth the very highest powers of the poetic mind were associated with a certain tendency to the diffuse and the commonplace."

Want of Humour. Other limitations of Wordsworth's genius are that he had no humour and little passion. He is singularly deficient in dramatic power and in his whole hearted pre-occupation with his own experiences he is insensible to critical self-consciousness.

Matter-of-factness. It lies in a laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects and their position and the insertion of accidental circumstances. The first appears superfluous in poetry and the second goes against the very essence of poetry.

Fondness for particulars. "He had a fondness for particulars, and there are parts of his poem which remind us of local histories in the undue relative importance given to trivial matters. *He was the historian of Wordsworth-shire.*"

Thoughts and images too great for the subject. "This is an approximation to what might be called *mental bombast* as distinguished from verbal ; for, as in the latter there is a disproportion of expression to the thoughts, so in this there is a disproportion of thought to the circumstance and occasion".

Absence of love poetry. "There is an element almost altogether wanting in Wordsworth, the absence of which forbids us to class him as a poet who has touched all important sides of human life-*the element of passionate love*. A few of his poems, such as Barbara, or in another kind *Loadamia*, solemnly glide into it and retreat, but on the whole this, the most universal subject of Lyric poetry, was not felt by Wordsworth".—Stopford Brooke.

His one sided ideal of humanity. "The ideal man with Wordsworth is the hard-hearted, frugal, unambitious dalesman of his own hills, with his strong affections, his simple tastes and his quiet and beautiful home : and this dalesman built up by Communion with Nature and by meditation into the poet philosopher, with his serious faith and his never spring of enjoyment, is himself failing. But nature has many sides and lies under many lights."

Avoidance of Nature's gorgeous aspects. Hereford says : "The thunders of the avalanche did not arrest him ; but when the winter-day was fading over the frozen lake, he had an ear for the alien sound of melancholy' sent into the landscape from the distant hills. The glow and colour of sunset, again, appealed to Coleridge or to Shelley ; Wordsworth feels rather the melting depths of the sky, or its blank loneliness, or its silence." It is only the tranquil beauty of Nature that appeals to the poet. The awful energies of the storm, the riot of the angry sea, and the blaze of a conflagrant sunrise, or the demon—dance of the thunder, have but little place in his poetry".

Omission of Nature "red in tooth and claw". Wordsworth celebrates the beauty, harmony and sublimity of Nature ; he is fortified by its calm and unbroken order, the holy plan of Nature. But Nature is not all a Map-day. She has a harsh and terrifying sight, of which Wordsworth was apparently oblivious. He loses sight of Nature "red in tooth and claw with rapine." He is silent as to her mysterious discords of pain, cruelty and death. Nature is cruel and careless of the happiness of her millions of subjects. The scenes where the poet found pleasure and solace are a battlefield and slaughter house for other creatures. Pain, fear and bloodshed are a }part of the law of life. Thus "Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken from half of human fate" it has been said. To this extent his poetry of Nature has been considered partial and incomplete.

(*xii*) CHIEF EXCELLENCES OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

According to Coleridge, the following are the chief excellences of Wordsworth's poetry :—

(*i*) *An austere purity of language*, both grammatical and logical, in short, a perfect appropriateness of the words of the meaning.

(*ii*) *A correspondent weight and sanity of thoughts and sentiments won*, not from books, but from the poet's own meditative observation.

(*iii*) *The sinewy strength and orginality of single lines and paragraphs.*

(*iv*) *His perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions.*

(*v*) *The meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility ; a sympathy with man as man ;* the sympathy, indeed, of a contemplator, rather then fellow-sufferer.

(*vi*) *Lastly, he has the gift of imagination in the highest and strictest sense of the word.*

In imaginative power, he stands nearest to all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton. He does, indeed, to all thoughts and to all objects—

> And the gleam,
> The light that never was on sea or land,
> The consecration, and the poet's dream.

Conclusion

What is the cumulative effect of Wordsworth's verse ? What 's its dominant note ? *It is not ecstatic, not gay, not tragic, but it is profoundly restful and restorative.*

Wordsworth's poetry has a soothing and tranquillising effect on the soul of man. John Stuart Mill, distracted by the political problems of the day, turned to him with infinite relief. "I felt myself" he says, "at once better and happier as I came under their influence". Many have been the sick minds, since Mill's time on whom the "*Medicine*" of Wordsworth's poetry has wrought a like change.

Wordsworth purifies our heart by breathing into us the sweet influence of Nature. He appeals directly to our will and conduct. He heals the heat of those that approach him with a reverent and appreciating attitude. He is the poet of silence and solitude, and can only be enjoyed in silence.

Wordsworth sets forth before us the supreme purpose of his poetry in a letter that he wrote to Lady Beaumount : "To console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier ; to teach the young and the precious of every age to see, to think, to feel, and therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous".

"Every great poet is a teacher" said Wosdsworth, "I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing". But he is not a dull moralist ; he is an inspired thinker who has given us a glimpse of "truths that wake to perish never".

Morley writes : "*What Wordsworth does is to assuage to reconcile, to fortify.* He has not Shakespeare's richness, and vast compass nor Milton's sublime and unflagging strength, nor Dante's severe, vivid, and ardent force of vision. But he possesses the skill to lead us into inner moods of settled peace, to touch "the depth and not the tumult of the soul", to give us quietness, steadfastness, strength, and purpose, whether to do or to endure".

2

A Critical Appreciation of "The Prelude"

OR

"The Prelude" : A General Survey

OR

Introducing "The Prelude"

Introduction

No one would probably like to dispute the authentic assertion by Helen Darbishire that 'the finest fruit of Wordsworth's great creative period is the poem published after his death in 1850 under the title of *The Prelude*. But the irony of the situation is that to the great poet-priest of Nature it was a minor piece of poetical work and he could in all probability never dream during his life time that in this portico to his Gothic Church, to his cherished monument—*The Recluse*, what a monumental work he was leaving for the posterity. Even he did not consider it to be worthy enough to have a separate title. He simply meant it to be just a 'preparatory poem', only an ante-chapel to the body of a Gothic Church. Alas ! the Gothic Church of his dream was never to be completed and the magnificent portico or the ante-chapel still stands supreme towering over so many small or great works of art, to be admired and appreciated by generations to come.

It won't be out of place if a comparison is drawn between Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and the grand temple-gates of *Gopurams* of the famous temples of South India-temples like those of the *Natarajam* at Chidambaram and of the *Meenakshi* at Madurai. Every temple has its tall, towering *Gopurams* with its fine artistic carvings, skilful workmanship and the grand architectural accomplishment. From a distance people often mistake it for the main temple

but when they enter the premises, to their utter surprise thev find the temple by itself paling into insignificance by the side of the magnificent *gopurams*. Same is the case with *The Prelude*; the Gothic structure of Wordsworth could never be raised to that undreamt of heights, but *The Prelude* stands supreme and still remains as 'the most vital work of Wordsworth's genius'.

To clarify the point most of the famous critics like de Selincourt, Garrod or Darbishire have amply quoted from the poet's *Preface* to the first edition of *The Excursion* in 1814. So let us quote here relevant portions from Wordsworth's own statement from that *Preface* :

> Several years ago, when the author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. The work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's Intellect is deeply of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature and Society; and to be entitled, *The Recluse*, as having for its principal subject the sensations and the opinions of a poet living in retirement. The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the anti-chapel has to the body of a Gothic Church ...... The first and third parts of *The Recluse* will consist chiefly of meditations in the Author's own person; and in the intermediate part (*The Excursion*) the intervention of characters speaking is employed, and something of a dramatic form adopted.

Chronology and composition

From the advertisement to the first edition of *The Prelude* in 1850 we come to know that the poem 'was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799 and completed in the summer of 1805'. But some recent commentators like Thomes Hutchinson, Harper and especially Garrod after painstaking researches have established that the preamble to Book I (Lines 1-45) was in all probablity composed in 1795 on his way from Bristol to Racedown. It has also been established that the first tentative draft of Book I of *The Prelude* was made in the winter of 1798-99, when he was in Germany and probably Book I and II were finished by October, 1800. Then, for some reason or other the poem was laid aside till January. 1804. It was taken up in right earnest and was completed towards the end of

May, 1805. In his letter to Sir G. Beoument on 3rd June of the same year, the poet writes :

> "I have the pleasure to say that I finished my poem about a fortnight ago. I had looked forward to the day as a most happy one ; and I was indeed grateful to God for giving me life to complete the work such as it is...... I ought to add that I have the satisfaction of finding the present poem not quite of so alarming a length as I apprehended.'

From Wordsworth's own statement it has been quite clear that this was to be the preparatory poem and was also to be biographical. So no separate title was given to it by him. And the title—*The Prelude* —under which it was published in 1850 was chosen by his wife, Mary Wordsworth. In fact, Wordsworth never intended to get it published during his life time. The poet would call it the 'poem on his own early life' and to Dorothy it was the poem to Coleridge'. To Coleridge it was nothing but a part of *The Recluse*, a great philosophical poem that was to be the monumental work of the life of the poet. On the 8th March, 1798 Coleridge wrote to Cottle :

> 'He (Wordsworth) has written more than 1200 lines of a blank verse superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything our language which any way resembles it. Poole thinks of it as likely to benefit mankind much more than anything Wordsworth has yet written.'

And from a letter written on 11th March, 1798 to James Losh we get from Wordsworth :

> I have been fairly industrious within the last few weeks. I have written 706 lines of a poem which I have to make of a considerable utility. Its title will be, *The Recluse* or Views of Nature, Man and Society.' It has also been found out that the poet had written some 1300 to 1500 lines of *The Recluse*. But Professor Garrod's researches have established that the major portion of these 1300 to 1500 lines was nothing but the beginning of *The Prelude*.'

It may be concluded now that 'the guardian angel of Wordsworth's poetical genius', Coleridge, both guided and inspired the poet to compose—

> .. ...some philosophic song
> Of truth that cherished our daily life ;
> With meditations, passionate deep
> Recesses into man's heart, Immortal verse
> Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre ;

So, before undertaking the arduous task of composing his great 'philosophic song', the poet began with 'the preparatory poem'—*The Prelude* ; and the poem was dedicated to his dear friend, Coleridge, 'most distinguished for his knowledge and genius'. Wordsworth must be beginning to realise that a poem on his own early developments might make a valuable introduction to his subsequent master-work, *The Recluse*, when in keeping with the aspiration of Coleridge was 'to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy' after assuming the

station of a man in repose, one whose principles were made up'. But fortunately Wordsworth was a poet first and not a philosopher as the friend of his heart and genius liked him to be. So his lofty venture composing a philosophic song ended in a few hundred lines of *The Excursion* that was published in 1814. But the composition of *The Prelude* was brought to a close in 1805 with his 'fuller project of a poem including his experience in France and bringing his story down to 1798, when he felt his genius ripe for expression'. The following lines quoted from Helen Darbishire make the point crystal clear : "Wordsworth's genius could not express itself in Coleridge's terms : he could not write the true philosophical poem. Perhaps no poet can. At any rate he was right to follow his own bent. His poetic thought sprang out of the living body of his experience and could only be delivered through images and incidents and characters which belonged to the life of man and nature as he knew it : the autobiographic form of *The Prelude* fitted his genius".

Purpose

The purpose of the poem is twofold : first, a self-examination, to fathom and find out if he was indeed a real poet and if he was fit enough for composing a great poem that will stand the test of time ; 'and secondly, a self-expression, enfolding the expression of an age of renewed nobility and manners' :

> May my life
> Express the image of a better time,
> More wise desires and simplest manners.

This is also quite evident from the introductory lines of *The Prelude* and there the poet speaks of himself quite explicitly as—'a renovated spirit singled out for holy services'. He also speaks of his verse as a 'priestly robe' with firm belief that he was—'a renovated spirit singled out'. Garrod has very nicely explained the point in the following lines :

"The purpose of *The Prelude* may, indeed, be said to be to search out, to seize and hold, among the many seemingly alien and incongruous images of self cast up by reflection, the image of the poet's true being, of his slowly self-realising individuality, of that in him in virtue of which he is a 'dedicated spirit.' "

An epic poem

It is quite known to us that Wordsworth had an epic mission. His highest ambition was to compose that great poem, *The Recluse*, which was to be the monumental work of his life. We also know that *The Prelude* was just to be the introduction to that great poem. But still we must accept "that *The Prelude* derives its energy and inspiration, its dignity and its religious aura from that larger epic mission toward which it was to lead'. Then Milton was Wordsworth's

poet—hero and it was but natural for a 'dedicated spirit, else sinning greatly' to take his epic task with high seriousness. Milton wrote an epic about man's moral rather than his military history and 'Wordsworth in turn claims to find heroic argument in man's (and, indeed, in one man's) personal history."

> A tale from my own heart, more near akin
> To my own passion and habitual thoughts."

A critical and close observation will reveal that in them, style, and structure it has close resemblance with an epic. Of course, the theme here in this poem is the loss of the paradise of the childhood than to regain that blessed stage through highly developed power of imagination and mystic experience of inexplicable delight through contacts with sublime and beautiful aspects of Nature. A modern American critic has very finely summed it up in this way. :

"If we are ready to grant *The Prelude* the other three epic qualities which Tilyard distinguishes—high seriousness, sustained exercise of the will, and even amplitude and breadth, we are hard put to think of *The Prelude*, for all its declamatory movements, as a spoksman for its age : the egotistical sublime must by its very nature rejected such demands."

Autobiography or poetical autobiography

It has always been a great headache for the critics and problem for the readers to treat the facts and incidents mentioned by Wordswroth in *The Prelude* as truly biographical. And critics and commentators have had to spend a lot of labour to find out the true facts from the different episodes of life mentioned in *The Prelude*. Now it would be better to note carefully at the very outset that Wordsworth himself has nowhere mentioned that *The Prelude* is a true and faithful account of his life. Let us quote again from the preface to *The Excursion* where the poet says of *The Prelude* : "The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the author's" mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently mature for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself. And the very sub-title of the poem—*Growth of the Poet's Mind*—clearly points towards the same idea. It 'conducts the history of author's mind—reveals the "Growth of a Poet's Mind". Of course, he has called his poem 'biographical', but still it is never that in a straightforward and chronological way. Here events never follow each other in the order in which they happened and 'the poem is shaped by a kind of internal logic of the growth of poet's mind rather than by the sequence of external events'. As for example, we may take up one of the most moving passages in *The Prelude*. This is his account of how he waited impatiently for the horses, which were to take him home for Christmas holidays ; and during this holiday his family was

orphanned due to the unexpected death of his father. This ought to have occured in Book I or II, but instead it has been recorded in Book XII. Again, we find that the actual biographical material begins from line 269 of Book I. We must understand that the poet has avoided the simply chronological arrangement in favour of one which would but stress on the essential importance of experiences and states of mind. To the poets the subjective aspect is much more important than the objective aspect of the poem. Sometimes a trivial incident like hearing a wren sing in a deserted chapel has also its significant role in the development of poet's personality and poetic vision. And very surprisingly the story of Annette Vallon, his French mistress, has never been mentioned by the poet throughout *The Prelude*. Again, the poet has devoted one entire book of *The Prelude* for the first year of his life at Cambridge ; but he has just skipped over the remaining three years.

It may, now, be safely concluded that *The Prelude* is not an autobiography in the usual sense, although it may, to a fairly good extent, be a source of information about the poet and a guide to the significant events in Wordsworth's early life.' Helen Darbishire has very rightly said : "In *The Prelude* Wordswroth gives a record—he will vouch for the truth of it—of that inner life out of which his poetry grew." Hence we may without the least hesitation discard the idea of treating *The Prelude* as mere autobiography and accept it as a great poetically autobiographical poem without any reservation.

Revision of "The Prelude" by the poet

We are well aware of the fact that though completed in 1805, Wordsworth intended *The Prelude* as an introduction to *The Recluse*, his great philosophical poem which he sketched in his *Preface to The Excursion*. We also know that *The Prelude* was not published during the life-time of the poet. When the poet realised that his ambitious project would never be completed, he went on revising the poem and made the most important revisions in 1828, 1832 and 1839. And the executors of Wordsworth published the final copy with all revisions and corrections in 1850.

It was Professor de Selincourt who first published the 1805 version along with the 1850 version in his great edition of *The Prelude*. According to him, the 1850 version is better in many respects as 'weak phrases are strengthened and its whole texture is more closely knit." Prof. Garrod and Helen Darbishire have also taken pains to make detailed examination of the different texts. Miss Darbishire tells us that Wordsworth's revision generally follow a familiar course : "bald simplicity gives place to a more decorative, more conventional literary form. (An innocent flat line, 'The day before the holidays began', is lifted into 'On the glad eve of those dear holidays. She has also pointed out many other alterations and

revisions due to the change that came over the poet's attitude and personal life in later years. We know that something went wrong between the two devoted friends in 1813 and as a result we find that a line like 'though twins almost in genius and in mind' is absolutely struck out in the revised text. Similarly his earlier zeal and enthusiasm for the French Revolution has been toned down.' Again due to his later conservative attitude we find the poet making some modifications to please Christianity. Miss Darbishire has also taken a lot of pains to establish that there were also some deep vital changes touching 'What we should now call the psychology of the poem'. And she tells us : "When his religious thought flowed into the channel of Anglican doctrine he had to retouch his autobiography, and incidentally tamper with its poetry, in the spirit of that doctrine" Harper, the great biographer of Wordsworth, seems to hold, to a great extent, a similar view. But all told and said it would be better to accept the well-considered view of Prof. Garrod who is not convinced '. . . . . *The Prelude* was revised by Wordsworth after 1807 in such a fashion as to do detriment, in essential matters, to its original purity of outline".

The theme or subject of "The Prelude"

The very sub-title of this great poem-*The Growth of a Poet's Mind* makes it crystal clear at the very outset that *The Prelude* is not an autobiography from the pen of Wordsworth in the usual sense. "In *The Prelude* Wordsworth gives a record-and he will vouch for the truth of it-of that inner life out of which his poetry grew." And the record starts from his very infant days when the poet 'held mute dialogues with his mother's heart. So we find the poem dealing with three main experiences of the three important stages of his life—the childhood, the adolescence and the period of his adventures in France and telling us in the end about his 'Imagination and Taste, How Impaired and Restored'. But it does not follow a straightforward course , rather it meanders like a river. 'It is the full intense life which he lived through his senses as a child and youth that he first tries to recapture and record'. Wordsworth had abnormal powers to live intensely in the past ; he could also revive and recreate it. And his main purpose in *The Prelude* was 'to recall and quicken into permanent life those pregnant moments'. This is quite in keeping with his own theory of poetry-"Poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility". In many of his famous poems, Wordsworth mainly talks of himself, of his experiences, of his vision of life and of his thoughts and beliefs. Among them the *Tintern Abbey*, *The Prelude*, and the lofty *Immortality Ode* are of special significance. They are faithful record of his inner life and emotional experiences and so enable us to have a glimpse of the innermost recesses of the poet's soul. In fact, what the *Tintern Abbey* tells us in brief *The Prelude* reveals to us in detail. Both the poems present the changing pattern of the poet's relationship with Nature and illustrate a perception which is central to all Wordsworth's thought. In the *Tintern Abbey*

the poet reviews the changes which have come about in his attitude to Nature and distinguishes three major changes. And we find a corresponding pattern emerging in *The Prelude* also. In the first stage the poet derived simple physical sensuous delight in Nature :

> I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure......... (Ll. 563-65)

In the second stage, he could have more mystical and spiritual pleasure from his close contacts with Nature :

> Thence did I drink the visionary power ;
> And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
> Of shadowy exultation. (II ; 311–313)

And finally the love of Nature leads to the love of man and this change brings about a sober attitude :

> ....in this time
> Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
> Despair not of our nature.........
> ....
> ....and in thee,
> For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
> A never-failing principle of joy
> And purest passion. (II, 440-50).

Again, in *The Prelude*, specially in Books I and II we may find three stages in the process by which the mystical relationship is established between the poet and Nature. First, the poet becomes conscious of the creative activity of his mind as it operates of what it sees :

> ....A plastic power
> Abode within me ; a forming hand, at times
> Rebellious, acting in a devisious mood :

In the second stage the poet is aware of images within his mind, 'as if they had passed through his senses, from an outer to an inner existence' :

> "Oft in these moments such a holy calm
> Would overspread my soul, the bodily eyes
> Were utterly forgotten and what I saw
> Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in the mind (II ; 348-52)

And in the third stage there is absolute suspension of the life of senses, the poet experiences a deep mystical sense of delight and hears the self-same song of all the beings in this universe not with his physical ears but :

> ....when the fleshy ear
> O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
> Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

This is an echo definitely from those inspiring lines of the *Tintern Abbey* :

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> O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
> Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

This is an echo definitely from those inspiring lines of the *Tintern Abbey* :

.. ..that serene and blessed mood.
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul

For a passage selected from *The Prelude* for publication in *The Friend*, De Quincey gave a very significant title : "Growth of Genius from the influence of natural objects on the imagination in Boyhood and early youth'. And in *The Prelude*, one of the greatest and loftiest poems of English literature, Wordsworth offers us a history of his mental and spiritual growth—'Growth of Genius from the influence of natural objects on the imagination . . . . . .

Nature and Imagination in "The Prelude"

In the foregoing paragraph we have clearly stated that *The Prelude* is really a faithful record of 'growth of a genius from the influence of natural objects on the imagination . . ..' It is the history of 'The Making of a Poet' ; or we may call it the record of the growth and development of the power of imagination of a poet. So if the mind of our poet or his poetic personality is the hero, then we may rightly assert that Nature plays the grand second role in this great autobiographical epic from the pen of an ambitious soul, 'singled out . . . . for holy services'. And her noble role is that of a benign mother. In that great poem *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth has already told us in a very lofty mood that Nature to him was :

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul,
Of all my moral being.

That is why Prof. Garrod has remarked :

"But the author of *The Prelude* was born,
One might think, of a mountainor a river
Rather than of human parents,"

And the true significance of Nature's role becomes absolutely clear to us when we find from the very beginning to the end of *The Prelude* how the most lovely as well as the sublime and awe inspiring sights and sounds of nature exerted a tremendous influence on his sensitive soul and shaped and moulded his mind, morals and poetic personality. We have also seen how his sense-impressions ultimately led him to those ecstatic mystic experiences enabling him to see into the life of things and endowing him with creative vision. For Wordsworth, "The vision of the senses melts and dissolves, but it melts into the revelation of permanent supersensual realities."

We should note that Nature is never inanimate to Wordsworth. For him Nature has personality a life of its own. According to the poet, only Nature can reveal to us fundmental truths. It is not at all wise to have trust in human intellect as :

Our meddling intellect
His shapes the beautious forms of things -
We murder to dissect,

This is spiritualisation of Nature. And herein lies the true originality of Wordsworth who considers Nature as, undoubtedly, original and unique. Prof. Bradley has rightly observed : "There have been greater poets than Wordsworth, but none more original. He saw new things or he saw things in a new way. . ."

Then in Book VIII Wordsworth tells us how love of Nature leads to love of Man. The very title of this Book is : *Love of Nature Leading to Love of Man*. And in Book XIII we find how during his 'wandering on from day to day' he came across humble and rustic people, poor or unfortunate and sometimes even across cranks and idiots. An intense sympathy for such human beings would well up in his soul and he would realise the dignity of man as man.

So the poet tells us :

Of these, said I shall be my song ; of these,
If future years mature me for the task,
Will I record the praises, making verse
Deal boldly with substantial things ; in truth
And sanctity of passion, speaking of these,
That justice may be done, obeisance paid
Where it is due......" (Book XIII : 232-238).

And in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* we get the same conviction from the poet : "Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restrain, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language ;. . .".

But this is not all. To Wordsworth Nature is also an eternal source of peace, comfort and strength. And the sub-title of Books XII and XIII—*Imagination and Taste, How Impaired and Restored*—makes the point amply clear. The poet's life had not all through been a bed of roses ; it had also its strenuous periods of storm and stress, of trials and tribulations. The poet had lost his parents in his early life thereby becoming more or less, an orphanned child. He has told us about his dull and uninteresting period of submissive idleness at Cambridge in Book III and about his disgusting and strenuous existence in London in Book VII. And then in Books IX to XI we find how the poet's lofty hopes and aspirations for the future of mankind in the beginning of the French Revolution were dashed to the ground at the terrible course of events that followed very soon. He was overwhelmed and probably faced the bitterest spiritual crisis in his life. His earnest attempt to tide over the crisis by deriving strength from Godwinism bore no fruit. And then came Mother Nature to his aid to bring infinite solace to his distressed and disappointed soil. At this point of spiritual crisis Wordsworth once more turned to Mother Nature—'The guide, the guardian of my heart and

soul'—for recovery, for strength and solace. And in the last three books of *The Prelude* we find how his impaired imagination and taste was repaired and how this faith in Man and Nature was restored in the company of Coleridge and Dorothy amidst the most lovely and sublime natural surroundings of the Lake District with its 'hundred hills', its 'trembling lake', its 'mountain solitudes' its 'orange sky of evening' and with its 'lonely roads' that were like 'open schools'. Hence we get these inspiring lines from the poet himself :

> ....Behold me than
> Once more in Nature's presence, thus restored
> Or otherwise, and strengthened once again
> (With memory left of what had been escaped)
> To habits of devoutest sympathy.
> (Book VII : 339-43).

And in the end all gratulent

Thus after tracing the growth of a poet's mind through various stages of his life with all ups and downs, with its storms and stress, the optimistic mind of the poet feels elated as 'this history is brought to its appointed close'. The poet is no longer a prey to his doubts and diffidence ; he has fully regained his confidence in his own powers as a poet for 'building up a work that shall endure'. Hence he feels himself raised as if a bird on wings and his poems seems to him like the enchanting song of a lark :

> ....and hence this song, which like a lark
> I have protracted, in the unwearied Heavens
> Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
> attempered to the sorrows of the earth ;
> Yet centring all in love, and in the end
> All gratulant if rightly understood.
> (Book XIV : 382-87)

Conclusion

The Prelude is an autobiographical poem and presents the growth of the poet's mind (as the sub-title indicates), as it passeed through different stages. Though it was published after his death (1850), it had been planned and begun sometimes in 1799 and finish- in 1805. It was addressed and dedicated to his friend Coleridge. It may be said that *The Prelude* is the most interesting and characteristic work of the poet. "This record of a growth of a poet's mind," says Moreley, "told by the poet himself with all the sincerity of which he was capable, is never likely to be popular" But its value as a human document is unquestionable, and this value is enhanced by the poet's introspective power and his accurate delination of details. *The Prelude* records the history of the poet's inner life from his childhood up to the time when he settled down at Grassmere.

The Prelude cannot claim a high place as a work of poetic art, though it is invaluable for its autobiographical interest. It has too many dull and even prosaic passages, and the narration is often interrupted by digressions. But there is real poetry, thrown in with careless abundance, and the long poem, divided into fourteen books has a certain measure of unity inspite of its digressions. *The Prelude* is indeed a remarkable poem, in that it is the poet's own record of the growth of his mind. In spite of its occasional dullness, it is "in its whole effect unique in impressive power, as a picture of the advance of a serious spirit from childhood and school time, through close contact with stirring and enormous events, to that decisive stage when it has found the sources of its strength."

3

Summary of the Fourteen Books of "The Prelude"

This long poem or personal epic of Wordsworth traces the growth of the poet's mind and soul from his infant and childhood days at Cockermouth in Cumberland and in the Grammar School at Hawkshead down to his settlement at Grasmere, when his mind attained its full maturity. The poem consists of fourteen books.

Book I

In Books I and II, we have mainly Wordsworth's childhood and boyhood experiences amid lovely sights and sounds of nature in the Lake District. In them we find the poet's early love of Nature and his growing consciousness of this attachment as well as of its benign influence on his mind and nature. In the beginning this love was purely animal or sensuous. In Book I we find the child deriving great delight from common sports and pastimes like fishing, bathing, bird-nesting, birds-snaring, skating, kite-sailing, expedition in a stolen boat, and noughts-and-crosses and cards. Almost all these pastimes would take place amidst lovely or sublime surroundings of nature. But even at this stage, slowly and almost imperceptibly the boy's sensuous love of Nature began to change into some sort of spiritual or mystical love. Discipline of nature ensued :

> Fair seed time had my soul, and I grew up
> Fostered alike by beauty and by fear. (I—301-2)

The best illustration of the discipline of fear would be found in those wonderful lines describing the poet's expedition in a stolen boat with a guilty conscience when :

> ....the grim shape
> Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
> For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
> And measured motion like a living thing,
> Strode after me (I—381-85)

And gradually our poet, still a boy at school, could commune with the spirit of Nature :

> When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
> Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
> In solitude, such intercourse was mine ;

The first ten years of the poet's childhood is covered by the first book. During this period the 'Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe' has been intervenient only. The animal happiness of the boy was, as it were, casually solemnized.

Book II

In the second book we get the second stage in the relation of the child to Nature. Still they were running a boisterous course taking part in boating, bowling and riding excursions. But during this period (from ten to seventeen) a change came over his appreciation of Nature. Nature is more or less, consciously sought by him 'for her own sake .

> "..............and I hasten on to tell
> How Nature, intervenient till this time
> And secondary, now at length was sought
> For her own sake." (II—200-03).

He began to love the sun :

> "But for this cause that I had seen him lay
> His beauty on the morning hills........." (II ; 183-84)

Gradually he felt some visionary power or creative sensibility within himself and this visionary power like a light emanating from within 'on the setting sun bestowed new splendour and lent greater enchantment to the sweet-singing birds, the murmuring fountain and to all other glorious aspects of nature. Ultimately the boy of seventeen through deep mystic experiences, when 'bodily eyes were utterly forgotten or 'the fleshy ear . . . . Forgot her function' attained a condition of supreme bliss to realise the reality behind nature or the unity in diversity in this universe just like the saints and seers of our Vedic age.

Book III

Book III deals with the poet's actual residence at Cambridge. He relates his experiences and tells us that he cared not much to be a scholar. It was a period of 'submissive idleness', ill-turtored for captivity . He abhorred the prescribed routine of the university. Here, we also find the poet giving a higher place to the element of passion or imagination.

Book IV

Book IV gives an account of the long summer vacation when he returned to well-known scenes of his native hills and to his old friends and companions. In this book, we get those beautiful lines that tell us about his realisation that he was 'a dedicated spirit'.

Book V

Book I to IV may be taken as the first movement of this long poem. After this the narrative is suspended and in Book V he tells about his indebtedness to books and reading in early life. The poet's famous tribute to the great English poets is included in this Book here we get such fine lines as :

..................And the gentle Bard,
Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State
Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
With the Moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,
I called him brother, Englishman and friend :

Book VI

Again, in this Book we get an account of the rest of his university days ; but he passes over it lightly. In these days he felt more lonely, but still Nature 'was sovereign in his mind.' In this Book we also find the poet 'emboldened to cherish' :

...............that I might leave
Some monument behind me which pure hearts

The poet tells us that he passed his second summer vacation quite happily with Dorothy and Marry Hutchinson and also gives an account of the walking tour of France and Switzerland during the third summer vacation. He had the good luck of landing in France at a time when :

Should reverence.
Europe at the time was thrilled by joy,
France standing at the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.

Alas ! the great disappointment was to come not at a very later date.

Book VII

In this Book the account of his walking tour is continued for some time. Then the poet gives us the account of his residence in London where he moved after taking his degree in January, 1791. Here we find the poet more interested in people around. Unfortunately, this Book contains, probably, the dullest part of the poem with the descriptions of his dull life in London.

Book VIII

We have the second pause of the poem with the poet's retrospective survey of his childhood and growing maturity and with its strange sub-title "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Man." It signifies that Love of Nature leads the poet to Love of Man.

Book IX and X

The third movement of the poem begins. In these two Books, we find Wordsworth's zeal and enthusiasm for the French Revolu-

tion and his strange and exciting experiences during his subsequent visit to France and we get such beautiful lines as :

"He also tells about his great intimacy with Beaupouis who inspired the poet with his great revolutionary enthusiasm. But soon came the great disillusionment. He was deeply shocked at the terrible course of events that followed and his faith in the great Revolution was shaken to the foundation."

Book XI

Disillusionment continued and it was complete when all the great ideals of the French Revolution were doomed and France entered upon a policy of great military aggression. He was overwhelmed and probably faced the bitterest spiritual crisis of his life. He tried to tide over the crisis by deriving strength from Godwinism, but without any effect.

Book XII—XIV

The fourth and last movement of the poem may be said to have started from Book XI. In the last three books we find how the gradual restoration of the poet's faith in humanity was ushered in. This happened mainly through the agency of Dorothy, Coleridge and the benign influence of Nature. In these Books we find the poet telling us how the imagination absorbing all experience and transcending it, links mankind with the divine. "Finally in the last book of *The Prelude*, he reveals it in its various aspects as the faculty of creation, the poetic faculty *par excellence*.

We can also discern some didactic tone in the closing sections of the poem. The voice of a wise sage seems to have started dominating over the thrilling note of the child of Nature.

4

The Claim of "The Prelude" To be an Epic Poem

A renovated spirit for holy services

Just after the preamble of the first Book of *The Prelude* we find Wordsworth telling his dear friend Coleridge, 'the guiding angel of his poetic genius', that he felt himself 'a renovated spirit singled out'. And while taking rest in the stillness of sheltered grove on his way from Bristol to Racedown he felt as if :--

> .... a higher power
> Than fancy gave assurance of some work
> Of glory there forthwith to be begun
> Perhaps too there performed

Again, in lines 229-30 we find that the greatest ambition of his life is to compose some :

> "...............immortal verse
> Thoughtfully fitted to the orphean lyre ;"

Doubts and diffidence and so "The Prelude"

This 'immortal verse' was to be his highly cherished philosophic poem-*The Recluse*. And it was Coleridge who constantly encouraged him to undertake this ambitious and arduous task. But the poet is diffident of his powers and recoils from such an arduous task. He seeks consolation from the hope that advancing years will endow him will maturer power of thinking and clearer insight to undertake and accomplish the major work of his life. Ultimately, all his *mental* conflicts and contradictions and his incapability to undertake the great task of composing an exalted poem on a noble theme send the poet's mind back to those childhood days which he passed amidst the most lovely sights and sounds of Nature that moulded his mind and manners from his very days of infancy. So to prepare himself for the major work of his life *i.e. The Recluse*-Wordsworth made up his mind to compose a minor poem, *The Prelude*, depicting the growth

of a poet's Mind. In his preface to the first edition of *The Excursion* in 1814 Wordsworth made the following remarks :

> "..............The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself ; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, he may so express himself ; as the ante-chapel has to a Gothic Church..."

All that we have said so far and the poet's words quoted above clearly point out 'that *The Prelude* derives its energy and inspiration, its dignity and its religious aura, from that **larger epic mission** toward which it was to lead'.

But the irony of the situation is that the Gothic church of the poet's dream was never to be completed and this preparatory poem, his portico to *The Recluse* grew in the poet's hand into one of the noblest poems of English literature with its fourteen Books—with its grand epic stature and significance. That is why Oliver Elton observes in his *A Survey of English Literature* : "*The Prelude* is laid out not unlike an epic, with episode and vicissitudes and a climax, in fourteen books. It is skilfully ordered for its purpose, for it begins at the end. The poet at the age of twentynine, is now safe in heaven, and relates long past voyage of the soul and imagination.

Important features of epic poems

Now let us take up some of the important features of epic poems. We know that the *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by Homer are the shining examples of this genre in European literature. We can have a clear idea about the main features and characteristics of an epic from these two great books. An epic is a long tale in verse. Great national heroes are generally its principal characters whose daring exploits and well-known adventures are narrated in lofty verse. There may be a number of digressions and different episodes, but the unity is maintained as the central figure of the hero always stands supreme. And the gods are always there to protect the heroes in great moments of crisis ; so supernatural elements have often important roles to play. And then as the action and exploits of the hero are noble and sublime, so the diction and style of the epic must be sublime and dignified.

Epic of one man's personal history

Before going into details let us take up another important point. We know that Milton was Wordsworth's poet-hero and it was but natural for a 'dedicated spirit, else sinning greatly' to take his epic task with high seriousness. It was Milton who first widened the nature and scope of the subject of the epic poem. He wrote an epic

about man's moral rather than his military history and 'Wordsworth in turn claims to find heroic argument in man's (and indeed in one man's) personal history'; and the following lines well clarify it :

> Sometimes it suits me better to invent
> A tale frcm my own heart, more near akin,
> To my passion aad habitual thoughts.

Mind of the poet—the real hero

A critical and close observation will clearly reveal that in theme, style and structure it has close resemblance with an epic poem. Of course, the theme here may be said to be the loss of the paradise of the childhood and then in the end to regain that blessed stage through highly developed power of imagination and mystic experiences of inexplicable delight through contacts with sublime and beautiful aspects of nature. So in this modern epic we may say that the mind of the poet is the real hero. And we get these illuminating remarks from Herbert Read on this point : "*The Prelude* has a large measure of poetic unity because it has a single hero—the poet himself."

Long poem—the conflict is spiritual

Like an epic, *The Prelude* is also a very long poem. It has as many as fourteen books depicting the voyage of discovery of a noble mind and soul. There is conflict also but the conflict is internal—it is spiritual conflict.

Digressions

There is also epic variety and digressions and they include the interesting incidents of bird-nesting, bird-snaring, adventure with a stolen boat, horse-riding, boating in the Lake etc.

Supernatural elements

In a way the supernatural elements have been replaced in this poem by the mystic experiences of the poet in such lines as :

> Ye Presence of Nature, in the sky,
> And on the earth ; Ye Visions of the hills ;
> And souls of lonely places ;

But it must be admitted that the mode of using the supernatural machinery in the ancient epics is conspicuous by its absence in this poem. Still the idea of growing up 'Fostered alike by beauty and by fear' and contemplating with awe that a towering peak

> ....With purpose of its own
> And measured motion like a living thing,
> Strode after me-

illustrate the supernatural elements in the poem in a powerful way.

Diction and style

As regards diction and style, *The Prelude* is really a sublime and dignified poem. The very preamble of Book I reminds us of Miltonic style and the long poem is full of lofty utterance in Miltonic blank verse. And there is no dearth of Homeric similies like :

> ....stood alone
> Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
> On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
> Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport
> A naked savage, in the thunder shower.

"The Prelude" : Is it an epic ?

'*The Prelude* is something unique in the literature of the world because it combines the epic power and range of poems like *The Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost* with the introspective voice of the writer himself', remarks Wery Gardiner. Every poet is a man of feeling ; and Wordsworth was of that category. He intended this long poem to be a revelation of how his mind grew under the influence primarily of Nature than of friends and books. His childhood, his boyhood and his bright youth have been poetically described in *The Prelude*. That *The Prelude* is an autobiographical poem is not doubted. Here, with his mind naked, does Wordsworth stand before us. With hungry heart he runs to the hills, the solitary abode of communicating with nature, he views stars and moon with joyful eyes. He avoids company in order to be alone in the midst of nature, his guide, educator and comforter. *The Prelude* describes all these. The poem furnishes us with such proofs from the poet's pen. But our query is, is the form of the poem epical ?

Wordsworth, the hero of 'The Prelude'

With a man like Wordsworth, who had dedicated himself to his art and to the leadership of men to the highest level he could reach, *The Prelude* became an epic of which Wordsworth was the hero. The poet knew that for a poet to talk so much about himself might lay him open to a charge of conceit ; but he was perfectly aware also that self-examination of this kind, in sincerity and humility, can reveal to humanity the whole picture of its own glory and despair. But those who have read *The Prelude* know there is no trace of vanity in it not the least suspicion of the exhibitionism. Selincourt states : 'Those who regard the mind of Wordsworth as both great in itself essentially representative of the highest, the imaginative type of mind well recognise its adventures as a fit theme for epic treatment." C.H. Herford refers to the epical side of the elements of epic greatness, an epic of which he was himself the hero.

Unity of design and epic structure

"As it stands *The Prelude* has not merely a unity of design", says Selincourt, "it has something of epic structure." 'Unity of design' lies

in the single theme: the mind of Wordsworth and its gradual development. The poem opens with an outburst of joy that after years of anxiety the poet is at last free to devote the life to its true vocation ; 'the last word of personal concern records his gratitude for the gift which brought him that freedom. Within this frame he places the history of his life from the seed time of infancy to those days, when he was first fully conscious that his genius was bearing fruit. *The Prelude* is something vast. Its fourteen books (from the point of view of its size) have an overwhelming effect on the minds of readers, The poet has journeyed within his own self.

Short analysis of the poem

"Books I-IV lead us through an account of his early life to the first great climax to his poetic consecration after which there is a pause in the narrative, while he reviews his life's history and carries it down to the moment before the second great climax, the awakening of his passionate interest in man (Book IX). But before this, the narrative pauses once more, whilst in Book VIII, he gives a philosophic retrospect of his whole period of preparation. Book X leads up to and records the catastrophe. The destruction of his hopes for man in so far as they were identified with the French Revolution, and his consequent despair of the mind. Books XI-XII give the reconciliation, his recovery from despair, the rebuilding of his hopes for man upon a sounder basis and as a consequence into poetic heritage. Thus it is the one figure of Wordsworth that remains visible through this length of the poem.

Nature of the epic subject

Wordsworth was in evident agreement with Milton on the true nature of the epic subject. Both of them repudiated military exploits, 'hitherto the only argument heroic indeed; in the desire to bring within its confines a more spiritual conflict.' From lines 170-219 of Book I, Wordsworth narrates the list of military subjects for his great poem. But ultimately he chooses for himself his life. The subjects of their epics prove that they raised the subjects of epic poetry. They have lent a new colour to epic as far as its subject is concerned. Nature and its relation to Man is a noble theme for an epic poet.

Sense of wonder and supernatural in "The Prelude"

The sense of wonder and the supernatural, typical of every epic, are also present in *The Prelude*. For the entire atmosphere of the poem is one of freshness and experience remembered by a great poet thinking about his past. He describes in an almost spiritual strain, the visionary experience of his boyhood as when he stole the boat and saw a hill coming after him or when he intruded the bird's nest.

I heard among the solitary hill
Low breathings coming after me and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod (Book I ; Lines 329-332).

What can be more full of wonder than talk to nature and hear her talk in a language which others cannot follow. And in the fourth Book there is that most famous passage of his poetic ordination :

My heart was full, I made no vows, but vows
Were than made for me ; bond unknown to me
was given, that I should be else sinning greatly
A dedicated spirit, (Book IV : Lines 341-344)

Miltonic tone of "The Prelude"

The Prelude bears a distinctly Miltonic tone. Wordsworth's style is sublime as it should be in an epic poem. It was Wordsworth's avowed ambition to be the Milton of his age ; nor as Keats recognised, was that ambition ill-founded. But Wordsworth himself was probably unconscious of the fact that his style had a strong Miltonic element which only goes to prove how completely he had absorbed his master.

"Wordsworth is indisputably the most sublime of our poets since Milton," remarks Bardley and refers to the "grandeur, austerity, sublimity" of Wordsworth's poetry. *The Prelude* is a unique specimen of his poetic "grandeur" "austerity" and "sublimity". Nothing is sublime unless it transports. Note the uplifting power of the following passage :

" for there's not a man
That lives whose path not known his godlike hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit
As natural beings in the strength of Nature , (Book III ; Lines 190-193)

In Book XIII, (Lines : 300-312), Wordsworth addresses his friend :

"If thou partake the animating faith
The poets, even as prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each his own peculiar faculty,
Heaven's gift ; a sense that fits him to perceive
Objects unseen before, thou will not blame
The humblest of this band who dares to hope -
That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
An insight that in some sort he possesses
A privilege whereby a work of his,
Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
Creative and enduring may become
A power like one of Nature's.

It is a noble thought, nobly turned by a noble person. Mark the grandeur of the passage given below :

"............yet, hail to you
Moors, mountains, headlands and ye hollow vales,
Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
Power of my native region ; yet that seize
The heart with firmer grasp ; your snows and streams
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds
That howl so dismally for him who treads
Companionless your awful solitudes ;

(Book VIII : Lines 215-222)

Such passages are flower-beds with which the poetic garden of *The Prelude* is made beautiful. In Book I (Lines : 528-531) Wordsworth addresses the eternal spirit as the great creative intelligence who informs the entire universe :

Wisdom and spirit of the Universe :
Thou soul that art the eternity of thought
That gives to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion .

Abercrombie calls *The Prelude* "one of greatest poems in English language—grand in scale, grand in subject, grand in execution."

Wordsworth's success in "The Prelude"

Wordsworth has succeeded in his aim in *The Prelude*. Compared with Milton's epic, Wordsworth is in fact more human though less grand, more humble : and though, it is at places difficult and dull, it is more intimate, more friendly, more human. Dr. Johnson's criticism that *Paradise Lost* lacks in human interest cannot hold good with regard to *The Prelude*. In contemplation it is as formidable as *Paradise Lost*. It is a unique example of its kind ; Wordsworth has made more of a long confessional poem than any one else. Without *The Prelude* the English language would lack its capital example of a new and impressive order of poetic architecture, observes a critic.

"The Tale thus unfolded at length", observes Herford, "is very unlike that which the ordinary public, up to and beyond the close of his life, imagined to have been his." It is the life story of no meditative dreamer, of no 'Recluse' even, though this was the goal which he sought through the troubled vicissitude of his first thirty years. Wordsworth in fact imposed, however, unintentionally, a misleading and mischievous legend about himself upon the English world, even upon his most loyal and devoted followers, when he refused to publish *The Prelude* until after his death. By keeping back *The Prelude* as Ker has justly said "Wordsworth made *The Excursion* his most authoritative work regarding his own temper and ideas. *The Prelude* is a story of life and will, not merely of meditations and theories. The purpose of the book is to show that his reflections spring from what is alive. Wordsworth's life comes out as a life of pure energy from the beginning, wakeful, alert, self-willed'.

"The Prelude" is the modern epic

The theme of the poem *The Growth of a Poet's Mind* is exhibited in a narrative form. It is much more than autobiography It is a story of universal significance, of which Wordsworth's own unique experiences offered as the type. It is the story of the mind greatly conscious of its own enigma, gradually establishing its secure relationship with a world equally enigmatic. The two enigmas indeed, remain ; but we understand that they are bound together in one inevitable destiny of companionship. The nature of each reflects the nature of the other. Each calls to other, and has its answer. This is the modern epic ; this is the heroic strain today, the grand theme of man's latter experience ; and grandly *The Prelude*, its first enunciation, declares it. Like *The Illad*, *The Aenied* The *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost—The Prelude* inaugurates an epoch in poetry with 'things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme'. And those other inaugural poems, it is not only conspicuous because it is the first to be so inspired, but because this very priority carries with it a sort of pioneering energy which shows itself in a new splendour of art. (L. Abecrombie)

Conclusion

Now all told and said we cannot fully assert that *The Prelude* has all the essential features of an epic. Thus says Herbert Lindenberger on this point : "If the modern readers are reluctant to award the laurels of epic poet to Wordsworth, it is not only that they are indifferent to the high claims of the genre, but perhaps also that *The Prelude* is deficient in that aspect of the "epic spirit" which E.M.W. Tillyard, in his admirable book on the English Epic, calls the "choric element" that we associate with epic : the feeling that "behind the epic" author is a big multitude of men of whose most serious convictions and dear habits he is the mouthpiece."

Critical Opinions

(*i*) On the subject of this poem, Selincourt remarks : "Wordsworth was in evident agreement with Milton on the true nature of the epic subject. Both of them repudiated military exploits, 'hitherto the only argument heroic deemed ; in the desire to bring within its confines a more spiritual conflict. Only the pedant will dissent from their conception ; and those who regard the mind of Wordsworth as both great in itself and essentially representative of the highest, the imaginative type of mind, will recognize its adventures as a fit theme of epic treatment". Wordsworth himself was humbler in his comments on *The Prelude*. He admitted, indeed, that it was a thing unprecedented in literary history, that a man should talk so much about himself. 'It is not self-conceit', he wrote, 'that has induced me to do this, but real humility I began the work because I was unprepared to treat any more arduous subject, and different of my own powers.' Here, at least, I hoped that to a certain degree

I should be sure of succeeding, as I had nothing to do but describe what I had felt and thought; therefore could not easily be bewildered. This might certainly have been done in narrower compass but as a man of more address I have done my best."

(*ii*) Elton remarks : "It is skillfully ordered for its purpose, for it begins at the end ; the poet, at the age of twenty-nine is now safe in heaven, and relates his long past voyage of the soul and imagination. And he ends with the dreams and consolations which had dawned upon his childhood, which had been deadened or clouded, but which have at last come back to him, ratified by experience, for good and all. The poem thus goes a kind of circuit." It opens with an outburst of joy that after years of anxiety the poet is at last free to devote his life to its true vocation ; its 'last word of personal concern' records his gratitude for the gift which brought him that freedom. Within this frame he places the history of his life from the seedtime of infancy to those days when chanting alternate songs with Coleridge as they roamed the quantock hills together, he was first fully conscious that his genius was bearing fruit."

(*iii*) Herford has pointed out one flaw in the epic structure of this poem. He says: "A poet who was consciously bent on composing epic, and not on relating the growth of his mind, would not have interposed those somewhat disconcerting pauses—the Book on his boyish reading, Book VIII a 'retrospect' of what was already told : nor would he have allowed the sixth Book (Residence in London) to be left so 'unstitched,' as, through mere fidelity to recollection, it remains. Bu interest and structural power return with the ninth Book.'

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Is it correct to describe "The Prelude" as an epic poem ? Give reasons for your answer.

2. "The Prelude" has a large measure of poetic unity because it has a single hero—the poet himself......The unity is epical and not philosophical. (Herbert Read) Elucidate.

5

"The Prelude" : The Spiritual Autobiography OR "The Prelude" : The Poetical Autobiography

The Prelude is the longest, noblest and most fruitful illustration of this 'spiritual frugality of Wordsworth and a handsome anticipation of the modern concept of autobiography, as has been shown by Lindenberger in his recent study of the poem. Here the aim is the preservation of the spirit of the past 'for future restoration' because the base of human greatness is childhood, which is father to manhood and, indeed, our days are bound together by the fibred piety, which the poet glances at in the remark that 'feeling comes in aid of feeling and a diversity of strength attends us if once we have been great'. Such feelings of childhood, the great visionary experiences, are 'the spots of time to which human mind may return again and again to drink energy and new vitality, as it were, at an inexhaustible fountain.' One is reminded of Eliot's famous remark that it is the pattern which gives meaning to history and pattern is formed in a selective process of memory as reviewed by the eye of the present. *The Prelude*, thus, gives a pattern or meaningful organization of events and experiences, of pleasure and pain, of beauty and fear which have given significance to the whole process of living and growing or the evolution of the present out of the past. It is in this sense that *The Prelude* is an autobiographical poem. "The great discovery of the 18th century", says George Poulet, "is to have conceived the prime moment of consciousness as a generative not only of other moments but also a self which takes shape by and through the means of these very moments . In the *Design and Truth of Autobiography* (London 1970) Roy Pascal has observed : 'Wordsworth is the first autobiographer to realise that

each man constructs out of his world a unique framework of meaningful events, and that the deepest purpose af autobiography is the account of a life as a projection of the real self (personality) on the world."

Preparatory poem to be biographical

Let us begin by quoting our poet's own words-relevant words from the Preface to the first edition of *The Excursion* in 1814 :

> Several years ago, when the author retired to his native mountains, with the hope cf being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind and examine how far Nature and Education have qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them......The preparatory poem is biographical, conducts the history of the author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself...........

This 'preparatory poem' is *The Prelude*, and the words quoted above make it crystal clear that it is to be biographical as it is 'to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers'. It was Coleridge, 'the guardian angel of Wordsworth's poetical genius', who guided and inspired the poet to compose—

> ....some philosophic song
> Of truth that cherished our daily life ;

This was to be his greatest poem—*The Recluse*, 'a literary work that might live'. So before undertaking that arduous task of composing his great 'philosophic song' the poet began with the preparatory poem—*The Prelude*. to serve more or less as a sort of portico to his Gothic Church (*The Recluse*). But the irony of the situation is that his lofty venture of composing a philosophic song ended in a few hundred lines of *The Excursion* that was published in 1814. Meanwhile composition of *The Prelude* went on and was brought to a close in 1805 with his 'fuller project of a poem including his experience in France and bringing his story down to 1798, when we felt his genius ripe for expression'. The fact is that Wordsworth was a poet first and not a philosopher as the friend of his heart and genius liked him to be. Helen Darbishire has rightly said :

> Wordsworth's genius could not express itself in Coleridge's terms, he could not write the true philosophical poem. Perhaps no poet can. At any rate he was right to follow his own bent. His poetic thought sprang out of the living body of experience and could only be delivered through images, incidents and characters which belonged to the life of man and nature as he knew it : the autobiographic form of *The Prelude* fitted his genius.

Not an autobiography in the usual sense

At the very outset it must be clear to us that *The Prelude* is not an autobiography in the usual sense. Of course in the preface to *The Excursion* the poet has told us that the preparatory poem is 'biographical', but he has also clearly stated that it 'conducts the history of the author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently mature for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself.' So, it may be biographical, but still not so in a straightforward and chronological way. Here events never follow each other in the order in which they happened. The poet has discarded the simply chronological arrangement in favour of one which would just stress on the essential importance of certain experiences and states of mind. To the poet the subjective aspect is much more important than the objective aspect of the poem. So we must be clear in our mind that the subject is not 'My Life', but 'The Making of a Poet', although Wordsworth has used the phrase 'the story of my life' at the end of Book I (Line 639). And Prof. Garrod has rightly said that "the purpose of *The Prelude* may, indeed, be said to be to search out and seize and hold, among the many seemingly alien and incongruous images of self cast up by reflection, the image of the poet's true being, of his slowly self-realizing individuality, of that in him in virtue of which he is a 'dedicated spirit'."

Poetic inspiration on his way to Racedown

Thus, in the very 'Preamble' of Book I we can, to a great extent, guess the shape of things to come. An unexpected legacy (£900) of a friend, Raislly Calvert, freed Wordsworth from pecuinary troubles. "Escaped from the vast city' the poet is on his way to Racedown from Bristal. And with 'the sweet breath of heaven' he feels 'a correspondent breeze' to inspire his soul with poetic zeal. And very soon he feels himself to be 'a renovated spirit singled out for holy services' and :

> ....a higher power
> Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
> Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
> Perhaps too there performed.

Well, the 'work of glory' was never begun or performed there ; instead we got *The Prelude*, 'the finest fruit of Wordsworth's great creative period'.

Record of inner life

So, in *The Prelude* we get a record—a record of that inner life out of which Wordsworth's poetry grew. "It is the full intense life which he lived through his senses as a child and youth that the first tries to re-capture and record".

So in Books I and II we have Wordsworth's childhood and boyhood experiences amid the lovely natural surroundings. Herein lies the greater significance of these two books. And from the poet we get that his poetic life began, as it were, on the banks of the Derwent when he was just a suckling babe. When he found himself—

> Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
> Turns recreant to her task
> He appeals to the river Derwent—
>
> ....Was it for this,
> That one of the fairest of all rivers loved,
> To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,

And when the boy Wordsworth was transplanted to that 'beloved Vale' of Hawkshead in Esthwaite it began, to some extent, consciously. The benign influence of Nature to shape and mould his character and poetic personality had already started :

> Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
> Fostered alike by beauty and by fear ;

Awakening of poet's love of Nature

But the awakening of poet's love of nature is the most siginificant element in his early education. At the early stage it was just a normal and healthy boy's love for open air sports and pastimes amidst lovely surroundings of nature. So in Books I and II we get an unforgettable recreation of his childhood involvement in physical activities and the joys and fears which were their consequence. In the first two Books Wordsworth tells us of various exciting activities in which he used to take part with all joy and zeal. In the first Book we have the following—bathing, bird-snaring, birds-nesting, an expedition in a stolen boat, skating, fishing, kite-sailing, noughts-and-crosses and cards. In the second Book, also we find they still 'ran a boisterous course' and their favourite pastimes were boat-races, boating excursions on the lake, walking tours and riding on horses 'through rough and smooth'.

Imotions of pleasure and pain

The first Book is studded with so many impressive incidents showing us the means by which Nature effects her discipline on young Wordsworth by evoking the emotions of pleasure and fear. Thus on a hot summer day the child would have pure animal pleasure by bathing or basking :

> Oh, many a time have it a five years' child,
> In a small mill-race severed from his stream.
> Made one long bathing of a summer's day ;
> Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
> Alternate, all a summer's day,............

And then during his night-adventure with the stolen boat we find how he was overwhelmed with an alarming sense of panic and fright by the awful sight of a towering peak when the grim shape :

> Towards up between me and the stars, and still,
> For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
> And measured motion like a living thing,
> Strode after me.

So the beautiful and sublime objects and images of nature with their benign influence ennobled his emotions and moulded his mind ; and the poet tells us :

> ....purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying, by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognize
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart,

Three stages of poet's love of nature

Another very significant aspect that strikes us in *The Prelude*, especially in the first two Books is that in it the poet has traced the three stages of his love of nature. We are able to mark three phases of development. In the first phase, as a child we find the poet deriving simple animal or sensuous delight in Nature :

> I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure............

In the second stage he could have more mystical and spiritual pleasure from his deep and close contact with Nature :

> Thence did I drink the visionary power ;
> And deam not profitless those fleeting moods
> Of shadow exultation.

And finally we find the love of Nature leading to the love of man and this change brings about a calmer and sober attitude :

> ....in this time
> Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
> Despair not of our nature.........
> ....
> and in fieet
> For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
> A never-failing principle of joy
> A purest passion.

Again, in the Book II of *The Prelude* we are aware of the other three phases in the process by which the transcendental or mystical relationship is established between Nature and the poet.

Wordsworth writes of himself

"Every man's life is best written by himself," said Dr. Johnson. Wordsworth took the hint and produced what Legouis describes

"the unique autobiographical poem." "Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is the greatest autobiography in verse in English" remarks Wren Gardiner. Wordsworth calls it : "A poem on my own earlier life." In the closing lines of Book I, the poet says that it (Book I) would form a part of the story of my life which he aspired to record in the following books. It is again in Book I that Wordsworth tells Coleridge that the poem would help the latter in knowing "how the heart was framed of him thou lovest."

Wordsworth admitted indeed that it was a thing unprecedented in literary history that a man should talk so much about himself. "It is not self-conceit", he wrote in a letter to George Beaumont in 1805, "that has induced me to do this, but real humility. I began the work because I was unprepared to treat any more arduous subject, and diffident of my own powers. Here at least, I hoped that to a certain degree I should be sure of succeeding, as I had nothing to do but describe what I had felt and thought ; therefore could not easily be bewildered :

'tis a theme
Single and of determined bounds'; and hence
I chuse it rather at this time, than work
Of ampler or more varied argument.

('The Prelude' Bk. I Lines : 668-671)

Wordsworth's poetry and his personal experience

The connection between Wordsworth's poetry and his personal experience is of the closest kind. and he undertook the writing of *The Prelude* in a mood of self-examination. The poet aspired to create a literary work that might live ; and he considered it right to examine his powers for such a task before he actually undertook it. The result was *The Prelude.* The poem is thus Wordsworth's assessment of his own powers and a record of those influences that moulded him. "The genius of Wordsworth is a genius that turned inward upon itself", says Releigh, "and in this psychological account of the growth of his own mind. and of the most significant of the influences that shaped it. he has done the biographer's work once and for all".

His boyhood in 'the beloved vale is the most memorable of all poetic boyhoods and the first two Books of *The Prelude* reach the highest levels of spiritual autobiography and touch now and then the highest levels of English poetry by simply recording with perfect fidelity whatever in it bore upon the growth of his own mind." (C.H. Herford) His account of the act of stealth and troubled pleasure "about the stolen boat ride". in Book I is heart-thrilling and shows the poet in this boyhood years. The concluding lines (390-400) of that incident and the experience it brought to Wordsworth are worth quoting. They move the readers because

they record what an everlasting impression the sight of seemingly moving mountain created on the poet :

> .... after I had seen
> That spectacle, for many days, my brain
> Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
> Of unknown modes of being : often my thoughts
> There hung a darkness, call it solitude
> Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
> Remained, no pleasant images of trees.
> Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields ;
> But huge and mighty of forms, that do not live
> Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
> By day, and were a trouble to my dreams".

Such experiences, as the poet says, became a part of his very being.

How the poet's mind grew under Nature's formative influence

The theme of the influence of Nature on man is the noblest part of Wordsworth's teaching in poetry ; and that is the theme of *The Prelude* Book I. This Book deals with his childhood and school time. "There is no other work in English language where the early joy and wonder, the passionate, solemn, awe-stricken delight of the simple experiences of boyhood are more sympathetically and more graphically described". From his words we learn how Wordsworth received the education of nature. Addressing the Derwent, the poet says :

> "Didst thou beauteous stream,
> Make ceaseless music through the night and day,
> Which......composed my thoughts.
> O more than infant softness, giving me,
> Among fretful dwellings of mankind,
> A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
> That Nature breathes among the hills and groves".

('The Prelude' Book I Ll : 267—285).

Wordsworth in his "fair seed time had wandered in the company of Nature, seen her summer beauties and Wintry colds, experienced her spring spells and autumn mellowness : he had become, as it were, a part of Nature. In the same book, he says :

> When I call to mind
> 'Twas at an early age, are I had seen
> Nine summers ...it was my joy
> To wander half the night among the cliffs.
> And the smooth Hollows......On the heights I plied
> My anxious visitation, hurying on,
> Still hurrying, hurrying onward ; Moon and stars
> Were shinning over my head ; I was alone
> And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
> That was among them".

('The Prelude' Book I. Ll. 309—324).

Compare it with a passage from Book V :

There was a boy ; ye know him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander......many a time
At evening when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting ; would he stand along
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake".

Here is the poet's reference to his boyhood. that boy grew to be a youth : he could not shake off these influences. "Mind in infancy is like body in the embryo". Wordsworth has described the formative influence of Nature of the unfolding mind of child. Thus unroofed school of nature attracted him more than the discipline of the classics and he learnt more eagerly from flowers and hills, and stars than from his books :

Love had Wordsworth found in the huts where poor men lie,
His daily teachers were woods and hill.
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

How beautifully and emphatically does he sign in one of his small lyrics :

One impulse from vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral, evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

His unbounded love and admiration for nature is the outcome of the unceasing influences he received from Nature during his early years. Wordsworth puts it in clear and emphatic words :

"The earth
And common face of Nature spoke to me
Rememberable things".

Wordsworth continues to describe his wandering in the midst of nature. It was his firm belief that nature took keen interest in the framing of human mind. We are told how he was led by nature one evening, when he "went alone in a shephered's boat," the journey in the boat is described and the reader is told how a huge cliff rose between the poet and the stars and "like a living thing" strode after him.

"With trembling hands I turned.
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the cavern of the willow tree."

Read the following portion from *The Prelude —Book I* :

"Wisdom and spirit of the universe
Thou soul that art the eternity of thought
That giv'st to forms and images a breath.
And everlasting motion . not in vain
By day or starlight thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thus intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul".

Such, in the words of the poet, was the influence of nature on the mind of Wordsworth. His poetry becomes "flood of rapture and a "rain of melody when Wordsworth speaks of his fellowship with Nature.

"Nor was this fellowship vouchsaf'd to me
With stinted Kindness. In November days
When vapours, rolling down the valleys, made
A lovely scene more lonesome ; among woods
At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
In solitude such intercourse was mine".

The memory of his intercourse with nature in his early childhood he calls as "unfading recollections".

Below are given passages from different books of the poem that show how Nature influenced the poet :

"The gift is yours
Ye winds and sounding cataracts, 'tis yours"
Ye mountains : thine, O Nature : Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations : and in thee
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never failing principle of joy
And purest passion".

('The Prelude', Book II. Lines 445—451).

Hail to you
Moors, mountains, head lands and "ye hollow vales
Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
Powers of my native region , Ye that seize
The heart with firmer grasp , your snows and streams
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
That how , so dismally for him who treads,
Companionless your awful solitudes".

('The Prelude', Book VIII. Lines : 215—222)

"O soul of Nature : excellent and fair,
That rejoiced with me, with whom I too,
Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye now
All ear..............
O soul of Nature : that by laws divine
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
Walk on this earth : how feeble have I been
When thou wert in Thy Strength".

('The Prelude', Book XII : Lines : 93—106).

Were open schools in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind
Whether by words, looks, sights, or tears revealed,
There saw into the depth of human souls
Souls that apear to have no depths at all
To careless eyes".

('The Prelude', Book XIIII : Lines 162—168)

"The Prelude" : A key to Wordsworth's poetry

Thus *The Prelude* is not to be viewed only as a poem of Wordsworth's life : it is a key supplied by the poet himself to unlock the door leading to his poetic chamber. With the help of this long, personal poem, a reader can understand and interpret the rest of Wordsworth's poetry more intelligently. It is a guide book for understanding comprehensively the unbroken relationship between human life and nature, without which life to Wordsworth was no life. His childhood became responsible for making Wordsworth a great poet of nature. *The Prelude* is the essential living document for the interpretation of Wordsworth's life and poetry.

Three things impress the reader of "The Prelude"

Three things must impress even the casual reader of this poem: (1) Wordsworth's love to be alone, he is never lonely with nature ; he is "less lonely when lonely" ; (2) Like every other child, who spends much time in the woods and fields, he feels the presence of some living spirit, real though unseen, and companionable though silent : (3) His early impressions make him what he, later on, becomes : "The child is the father of man".

"The Prelude" and Wordsworth's poetic genius

The Prelude Book I offers an instructive peep in the workshop of the poet. Through Wordsworth's own mouth we hear of his mind's desire to "gladly grapple with some noble theme", and how the mind, finding impediments "from day to day renewed", was content "to yield up those lofty hopes". A touching reference is made to his "unmanageable thoughts". We are informed that he possessed all that was "needful to build up a poet's praise." He had the "first great gift : the vital soul", "general truths . Nor was he naked in forms, images and numerous other aids which are "won perhaps with toil". The poet was invaded by doubts. Had he the strength to assume so awful a burden ? Would it not be wiser to await those "mellower years" that "bring a riper mind." Are his mis-givings founded, or are they mere timidity and laziness, a subtle form of selfishness cloaked in humility and modest awe ?

> But from this awful burthen I full soon
> Take refuge, and beguile myself with truth
> That mellower years will bring a riper mind
> And clearer insight. Thus from day to day
> I live, a mockery of the brotherhood
> Of vice and virtue, with no skill to part
> Vague longing that is bred by want of power
> From paramount impulse not to be withstood
> A timorous capacity from prudence ;
> From circumspection, infinite delay.
> Humility and modest awe themselves

Betray me, serving often to cloak
To a more subtle selfishness, that now
Doth Lock my functions up in a blank reserve
Now dupes me by an over-anxious eye
That with a false activity beats off
Simplicity and self presented truth
This is my lot, "he says ; and continues
for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting, so much wanting in myself.
That I recoil and droop".

We find poems in their finished forms ; but Wordsworth has described what pains a poet has to undergo and what periods of uncertainties he has to go through. Thus "poetic experience itself becomes the subject of *The Prelude*, the "Presiding genius" of the poem.

Other influences on the poet

Besides the great influence that Nature excercised over the poet's mind we are told in Book V of Wordsworth's debt to literature and learning. It is true that the Book does not deal in detail with the books on which Wordsworth had fed in his early years. But *Arabian Nights*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and *Othello* are mentioned as his favourite books. Infiuence of Dorothy and Coleridge on him should not be lost sight of.

Two Versions of "The Prelude" as indications of the growth of the poet's mind

A comparison of the 1805 and 1850 texts gives us further information about the growth of the poet's mind between the two dates. The critics are not agreed as to which of the two editions is better than the other ; but the changes made in the original text indicate a change in Wordsworth's mental powers :

(1) Bald simplicity (of 1805) gives place to more decorative, more conventionally literary form.

(2) Rough and crude expression is smoothed and clarified ; faults of ambiguity and loose repetition are carefully amended.

(3) "The most vital changes lie deeper still", says Helen Derbishire, "they touch that we should now call the psychology of the poem." In the early *The Prelude* Wordsworth told of the inner workings of his mind as nakedly and truthfully as he could. The changes most to be deplored in his later text are those which overlay and obscure that native expression ; they often mar the poetry ; more often disguise the truth". Thus in the former version the feeling is more geniune and spontaneous, less cautious ;

in the latter the style is generally speaking stronger and more finished. The first reveals personality more genuinely, the second reveals him as an artist.

What does the poem reveal ?

It is generally when an autobiography deals with the author's childhood and first beginning that he most often succeeds in reaching the hearts of his readers. Wordsworth's life which to many of his readers appeared to monotorous affairs, comes out in *The Prelude* as a life, of 'pure energy from the beginning, wakeful, alert, self-willed. It is true that the poem is a story of the poet's own life. But its story, by itself, is not so important. The poem is the study of the origin of Wordsworth's poetic power : *The Prelude* is less a narrative than a study of origin, less the history of man than the philosophy of mind. In order to appraise the poetic genius of Wordsworth, let one read *The Prelude* in which the sources of his poetic inspiration are to be found.

"A note of personal tenderness, an almost elegiac inclination to evoke the memories of his own childhood, make *The Prelude* the most admirable record of a soul's progress towards the full possession of self, which is implied in the apostolate of a poetic calling". (Louis Cazamian). Read the opening lines of *The Prelude* Book II :

"Thus far, O Friend : have we though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked ;
Those chiefly that led me to the love
Of rivers, woods and fields. The passion
Was in its brith, sustained as might befall
By nourishment that come unsought" ;

Also read

A child I held unconscious intercourse
With eternal beauty, drinking in
A pure organic pleasure from the lines
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by steady clouds.

'The Prelude' (Book I. Lines 589—593).

and

................Ye mountains, and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
That dwell among the hills where I was born.
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have
lived with God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires
The gift is yours.

'The Prelude' (Book II, Lines : 424 —432).

(*viii*) Keats's description of Wordsworth : His Egotistical Sublime

The limitations of Wordsworthian temperament and of the poetry, which mirrors it, have been pointed out and dialated upon by many a critic--his narrow range, his inequality, lack of humour and of sympathetic understanding of other poets and their modes. Great emphasis has been laid on his lack of dramatic power of negative capability to that his characters appear to be the copies of his own personality and his best poems are in the nature of monologues. All these and many others, which critical curiosity may discover in his poetry, have been attributed to, what Keats was pleased to describe, his 'Egotistical Sublime', his complete engrossment with his own self which made whatever he wrote significant and valuable in his own eyes and led him to generalize from his personnal impressions and pet notions and obscured his vision regarding the truth and beauty in the work of other writers."

Coleridge himself has described him as a person wholly masculine and philosophical in His outlook: "His proper title is spectator *ab extra.* Although he is capable of the most profound sympathy 'with man as man', his is the sympathy of a contemplator rather than of a fellow sufferer ; he feels for but never with his subject.

There is substance in this view which compels acceptance, yet its full implication must be taken into account. Wordsworth has defined the poet as 'a man speaking to men', though one of deeper sensibility and more comprehensive soul. He was not a nightingale singing in darkness, for Wordsworth was still a believer in the eighteenth century doctrine that the heart and soul of humanity are the same everywhere and in all the ages. So the exceptional insight of the poet will be beneficial to the whole human race. He distinguished the poetic truth from the scientific knowledge and called it the truth operative. That is, truth carried alive into the heart with feeling ; and concluded that the poet binds together with passion the whole empire of human society.

In the concluding verses of *The Prelude* he addresses his fellow poet, Coleridge, and tells him with confidence that truth propagated by them will set society on the right path to love and liberty, if men under the influence of a natural weakness, go astray and relapse into barbarism. The letter in which Coleridge requested Wordsworth to compose his philosophic epic, clearly mentions its main object, which was nothing else but the revival and nourishment of that hope in the hearts of men and women which was dwindling and sinking under the stress of despair born of the French Revolution. He had not even an iota of doubt of the healthy influence of his works and he frankly stated that 'they will co-operate with the benign tendencies of human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better and happier".

That this is not the mere boast of an egoist but a statement of truth is borne out by the confessions of John Sturat Mill and Rutherford about benefits they actually received from his poetry, the one a nourishment for his dried up senses and emotions and the other a living substitute for the Orthodox Christian Deity, petrified into a mere idol, in his age, under the icy touch of scientific agnosticism.

In an article in a recent issue of P.M.L.A., under the caption, 'Poet of the Present Crisis', N.S. Tillet has stated that the poet (William Wordsworth) who discovered 'the present good in life's familiar face' and recognized all the sacred claims and heaven-descended rights of the common man, who acknowledged 'one great society alone on earth, the noble living and the noble deed' ; the poet who hurled defiance at the enemies of freedom in timeless phrases, that poet seems particularly fashioned for an age of crisis like the one through which humanity of today is passing. In this way Wordsworth's egotistical sublime has, after all, its own compensations in the sublimity and intensity of his best poems and the priceless wisdom which they embody for those who have eyes to see and heart to feel and experience its presence.

Conclusion

Thus in *The Prelude* we find the poet first trying to recapture and record the full intense life which he lived through his senses as a child and youth. Wordsworth had the extra-ordinary power to 'live intensely in the past, he could revive and recreate ; and it is a chief part of his purpose in *The Prelude* to recall and quicken into permanent life those pregnant moments. For they were, he well knew, the making of him as a poet'.

We may now conclude without any reservation that *The Prelude* is not an autobiography in the usual sense from the holy pen of the 'high priest of nature'. In it we have the faithful record of his inner life and emotional experiences enabling us to have a glimpse of the innermost recesses of the poet's soul. So we may unhesitatingly call it a spiritual or poetical autobiography. Prof. Herbert Read has justly observed : "*The Prelude*, undoubtedly places before us Wordsworth—the revolutionary ; Wordsworth—the man ; Wordswroth—the poet ; and finally, Wordsworth—the high priest of nature."

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. In what respects is "The Prelude" the history of the poet's soul.
2. " 'The Prelude' is the most admirable record of a soul's progress towards the full possession of the self." Discuss.
3. Discuss. Books I and II of "The Prelude" as autobiography.

6

Nature in "The Prelude"

Nature's influence from the very dawn of life

The very sub-title of this great poem tells us that its main theme is 'the growth of a poet's mind'. And if the mind of Wordsworth is the real hero, Nature plays the most vital part, the grand second role in this unique autobiographical epic. Her noble role is that of a benign mother, guardian and nurse exerting great elevating influence on the mind and soul of the poet from the earliest dawn of his life. And this started from the earliest stage when the poet was just a suckling babe in his mother's arm. So in the very first book we find how all his mental conflicts and contradictions and his sad failure to undertake the great task of composing an exalted poem on a noble theme send the poet's mind back to those infant days which he passed in the proximity of the river Derwent. And with what a deep emotion he addresses the river :

> ....For this, didst thou,
> O Derwent ! winding among grassy holms
> Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
> Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
> To more than infant softness, giving me
> Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
> A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
> That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

Formative influence of Nature from early childhood

The true significance of Nature's role in moulding the personality of the poet becomes crystal clear to us when he tells us how from the very childhood, in a very lovely and favourable environment he was nursed and brought up by the various ministries of mother-Nature with the help of her the very lovely as well as the sublime and awe-inspiring sights and sounds :

Fair seed time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear :
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved vale to which one long
We were transplanted ; ('The Prelude' Book I : 301—305).

The point has been very nicely elucidated by Legouis and Cazamean when they say : "To Wordsworth Nature appeals as a formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike, the sower in our hearts of the deep laid seeds of our feelings and beliefs."

Ministry of beauty

To illustrate the ministry of beauty and fear the different books of *The Prelude* is replete with various incidents or 'spots of time'. The account of the exciting skating game on the ice relates very powerfully the poet's rather superconscious experience at the sight of one of the most beautiful visions of nature. When they were rapturously wheeling about and when 'through the darkness and the cold' they flew :

...............with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron ; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west,
The orange sky of evening died away.

('The Prelude' Book I ; 440–47).

Nature of pain or fear : bird-nesting

As regards the ministry of pain or fear the incident of bird-nesting and that of adventure in a stolen boat illustrate the contribution of fear to mental growth of the poet. Once at the dead of night the boy Wordsworth, when a strong desire overpowered his better reason, stole away a wood-cock 'which was the captive of another man's toil'. And after the commission of this undesirable deed :

I heard among the solitary hills
How breathings coming after me, and sounds,
Of undistinguishable motion steps
Almost as silent as the truf they trod.

('The Prelude' Book I ; 322–25)

Stolen-boat episode

The best illustration is probably that adventure in a stolen boat :

It was an act of stealth.

Troubled pleasure

And when the stolen boat started moving over the smooth surface of the lake, to his great dismay he found a huge peak 'upreared its head'. To the boy it appeared like an awful and strange living being with a will and power of its own following him with regular foot-steps with some fixed purpose. After this frightening incident, the poet 'through the meadows homeward went' with a trembling heart and in a pensive mood :

> ....but after I had seen
> That spectacle, for many days, my brain
> Worked with a dim and undermined sense
> Of unknown mode of being ? o'er my thoughts
> There hung a darkness, call it solitude
> Or blank desertions. No familiar shapes
> Remained, no pleasant images, of trees,
> Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields ;
> But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
> Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
> By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.
> ('The Prelude' Book I. 390—400).

Nature spiritualised

Next in *The Prelude*—specially in Books I and II, Wordsworth traces the growth of his love of nature and the various stages through which it passed. It may be noted here that Wordsworth spiritualised nature by making her a moral teacher. As a poet this is his most important contribution and herein lies his chief originality that is wonderfully revealed in his poetry of nature. Compton-rickett has rightly said : 'It was Wordsworth's aim as a poet to seek for beauty in meadow, woodland and mountains, and to interpret this beauty in spiritual terms. He is ever spiritualising the moods of Nature and winning from them moral consolation'. But this spiritual conception developed through various stages.

First stage in the growth of poet's love of Nature

In the first stage his passion for Nature was in its infancy and was kept enthused and nourished by his surroundings without any conscious or deliberate effort on his part—'By nourishment that came unsought'. This is the stage that we find mainly in Book I. Here we find the poet :

> ....drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure from the silver Wreaths
> Of curling mist, or from the level plain
> Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

Second stage

The poet speaks about his second stage in the beginning of the second book. In the previous stage he was almost totally interested in the exciting sports aud pastimes and was not so much

conscious of his natural surroundings : but now he seemed to have a conscious urge to have Nature 'collaterally attached' to all their plans for all sorts of games and pleasures :

> ....But the lime approached
> That brought with it a regular desire
> For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms
> Of Nature were collaterally attached
> To every scheme of holiday delight
> And every boyish sport, less grateful else
> And languidly purused.

('The Prelude'. Book II : 48—54).

Third stage

Their boating excursions 'over the shadowy lake' and their riding adventures on 'the galloping steed' over hills and dales, 'through rough and smooth brought the poet in closer contact with the charming and sublime aspects of nature. Slowly Wordsworth's sympathies or spiritual powers enlarged and familiar and common objects became dearer to him day by day. He then began to love the sun not for its life-giving power but because it bathed the hills in its radiant beauty at dawn and touched the western hills with its golden-fingers before it set in the west. And here the poet very clearly speaks of another important stage in his attitude towards Nature :

> Those incidental charms which first attached
> My heart to rural objects, day by day
> Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
> How Nature, intervenient till this time
> And secondary, now at length was sought
> For her own sake.

('The Prelude' Book II. 198—203).

This third stage is a very important one in the development of Wordsworth's personality as a poet, as the 'high priest of nature'.

Final stage

In the final stage we find the poet's attachment to Nature growing into a religious love. At this stage he has mystic visions and has had a feeling of the existence of a visionary power, a creative sensibillity within himself and has a realisation of the unity and harmony underlying all the diversities of Nature. When the poet is 'laid asleep in body', he becomes 'a living soul' and can 'see into the life of things'. He is now gifted with a plastic power and hence :

> ....And auxiliary light
> Came from mind, which on the setting sun
> Bestowed new splendour : the melodious birds,
> The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
> Murmuring so sweetly in themeselves, obeyed
> A like dominion, and the midnight storm
> Grew darker in the presence of my eye.

('The Prelude'. Book II : 368—74).

Imagination, the poetic faculty par excellence

Thus, slowly Wordsworth through his sense experiences has become 'creator and receiver both', has acquired that highest intellectual power—imagination. In the last book of *The Prelude* the poet reveals it in its various aspects as the faculty of creation, the poetic faculty *par excellence.* And this poetic faculty *par excellence* is really the hero, the leading figure, the presiding genius of *The Prelude.* Wordsworth 'was deeply conscious of the power which fostered his genius, and when he probed into its sources he found that it came to him originally through a special awareness of Nature ; it was there that a shaft opened which reached down to a new world of life'. Prof. Garrod has very nicely elucidated this point in the chapter on *Sense and Imagination :* 'the glory of the senses passes into a glory of the imagination precisely being fastened to the affections. . . . . .

...............The vision of the senses melts and dissolves,

but it melts into the revelation of permanent supersensual realities. . . . . In every impression of sense Wordsworth conceives that there is present from the beginning an imaginative activity. Sense and imagination are two extremes in the scale of poetic or spiritual apprehension : but the higher faculty is always obscurely present in the lower.

Nature as the best guide and teacher

Wordsworth also considered Nature to be our best guide and teacher. To him books were all dull and dreary. Probably we all can remember those oft-quoted lines :

One impulse from a vernal wood,
May teach you more of man
Of moral evil and good
Than all the sages can.

At the end of Book II also the poet addressing the mountains and lakes tells us the same thing :

If, in my youth, I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasure, and have live'd
With God and Nature communing, remov'd
From little enmities and low desires,
The gift is yours ; ....

('The Prelude' Book II-427—32).

Source of great comfort and strength

Not only this, for Wordsworth Nature was an eternal source of great comfort and strength. When, after the failure of the great hopes and ideals of the French Revolution, the poet was passing through a strenuous mental and spiritual crisis and when his mental

horizon was darkened by doubts and disappointments, it was the lovely and peaceful surroundings of the Lake District that brought peace and solace to his dejected soul. Books XII and XIII elaborately tells us how imagination and taste of the poet was impaired and how it was restored in the company of Dorothy and Coleridge amidst the lovely hills and dales, stormy wind and the murmuring fountains, meandering rivers and mighty mountains of the beautiful Lake District of England.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we may justly assert that Wordsworth has rightfully been called by the critics and readers alike, 'the high priest of nature', the 'harbinger of nature' or the 'worshipper of nature', as no other poet has understood Nature as Wordsworth does. His treatment of nature is original and unique. To Wordsworth nature is not inanimate. Nature is a living and organic unity with a life and personality of its own. "There have been greater poets than Wordsworth, but none more original," says Bradley. And to Abercombe—"His whole life belonged to nature, and nature to his poetry was what it was to Lucy, both law and impulse."

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Books I and II deal with Wordsworth's early love of Nature and the growth of his consciousness of it. Elaborate and illustrate.
2. Write an essay on the Nature and quality of Wordsworth's descriptive gift as seen in "The Prelude" Book I and II
3. Write a note on Wordsworth's pantheism as evidenced in "The Prelude" Books I and II.

7

Nature in Relation with Man in Wordsworth

Nature and Man in Wordsworth

"Wordsworth had his passion for Nature fixed in his blood," observed De Quincey ; "it was a necessity of his being like that of the mulberry leaf to the silkworm, and through his commerce with Nature did he love and breathe. Hence it was from the truth of his love that his knowledge grew. If Wordsworth had a favourite subject it was Nature and when he treated of man it was essentially in relation to Nature. It was the love of Nature that led him to the love of man. In the words of Pater, "Wordsworth approached the spectacle of human life through Nature. When he thought of man it was as in the presence and under the influence of effective natural objects and linked to them by many associations.

This theme of the influence of Nature on man is the noblest past of Wordsworth's teaching in poetry. Nature is the best educator and she is ever interested in Man and tries to impress human mind from its earliest dawn :

"I believe
That Nature, often times, when she would frame
A favour'd Being, from his earliest dawn
Of infancy doth open up the clouds
As at the touch of lightning, seeking him
With great visitation."

('The Prelude' Book I, 362—367)

Wordsworth's treatment of Nature is different from that of other poets

Nature in Wordsworth's poetry is not regarded as a background for his pictures of men nor, as earlier poets had also somewhat shown it, as mere mirror reflecting the feelings of man, but rather as a wonderful power around us calming and influencing our souls. None before him had seen in Nature what Wordsworth could find in her. He looked at Nature as the mystic of the old days read the page of holy writings. Essentially Wordsworthian feature of his treatment of Nature is his intense spirituality. Read below what he speaks of Nature :

.... she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, neither evil tongues
Rash judgments, nor the success of selfish men
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."

('Tintern Abbey' : 125—135)

The similar idea is beautifully and effectively expressed in these lines :

"The mind of Man is fram'd even like the breath
And harmony of music There is a dark
Invisible workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, and makes them move
In one society."

('The Prelude' Book I, 351—355)

In the same poem and the same book, also read

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe !
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought !
That givest to forms and images a breath
And ever-lasting motion."

Wordsworth insists that through contact with Nature the heart is exalted and made happy. Such happiness and exaltation is moral and in such a moral condition the heart can do no wrong. "Wordsworthian Nature and Wordsworthian Man appear profoundly akin."

How does Nature teach ?

Let man react his sensibilities to the beauty of the sunset, the quiet dark night, the fragrance of flowers, the calm strength of mountains, and freshness of the vernal wood, and he will be possessed of peace that would lend a colour to his life. This thought is in all that Wordsworth writes. At the sight of the rainbow his heart "leaps up with exaltation" ; the daisy will "repair" it with gladness" ; with the daffodils it "dances" ; the "meanest" flower that blows" can give poet "the thoughts too deep for tears." This is the mystical conception of Nature of Wordsworth. For this we have to approach nature in a mood of "passive receptiveness. He called Nature "the nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul of all my moral being."

His theory of Nature based on personal experience

"The poetry of Wordsworth," says Herbert Read, "is heavily surcharged with the personal quality." He writes of that which he had experienced in his own life. Nature had educated him. She had uplifted him to a life of peace and delight. In *The Prelude* Book I, we find the poet telling Derwent river how it had reacted his thoughts.

> To more than infant softness, giving me
> Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
> A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
> That Nature breathes among the hills and groves."

He tells us

> "A child I held unconscious intercourse
> With the eternal Beauty, drinking in
> A pure organic pleasure from the lines
> Of curling mist ;"

and further

> "...............the earth
> And common face of Nature spake to me
> Rememberable things "

and

> "Nature by extrinsic passion first
> Peopled my mind with beauteous forms or grand,
> And made me love them."

The passages have no two meanings. The poet addresses the "Presences of Nature" "in the sky and on the earth who have employed these agencies to haunt him among his boyish sports.

Here is the poet who had been brought up in natural surroundings "It was my joy to wander half the night among the cliffs and the smooth hollows, and 'in these night wanderings, I was alone," says Wordsworth in *The Prelude Book I* :

> "I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod,"

These are mystical experiences he had. His faith in the formative influence of Nature continued to be what it was in his early years. What he received in the impressionable period of his life, continued to be his for ever.

Wordsworth "has written some of the greatest poetry of Man, some of the greatest poetry of Nature . , . . . He is a poet of man, alone facing the sublimities of the simplicities of Nature or of men and women who are a portion of these simplicities. Man in society, in cities, and the state, he knows them, as a poet he does not know them. (C.H. Herford) The best in man comes out during his companionship with Nature. Infact, Nature has the power to draw out from within us those hidden powers that go to build what we essentially are Latent is made manifest through contact with nature. Nature is all-prevading and Universal Mind which is also all-prevading is ever in an established relation with Nature. This fact has been realized by Wordsworth in the way in which no one else has so far realized it and nor will ever do it

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. What comments does Wordsworth offer on man and the mind of man in "The Prelude" Books I and II.

8

The Real Purpose of "The Prelude"

Renovated spirit singled out

Wordsworth has escaped from that vast city of London where he had long 'pined a discontented sojourner'. The unexpected legacy from his friend Raisley Calvert has greatly relieved him of his pecuniary trouble. The poet is on his way to Racedown from Bristol. With 'the sweet breath of heaven' that was caressing his cheeks the poet 'felt within a correspondent breeze'. This was the breeze of poetic inspiration—of creative urge. And very soon :

> ... .poetic numbers came
> Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
> A renovated spirit singled cut,
> Such hope was mine, for holy services.

So in the very post-preamble to *The Prelude*, Book I we find that Wordsworth feels himself to be—'A renovated spirit singled out. . . . . for holy services'. And while the poet was taking rest in a green shady place, 'settling into gentler happiness' :

> ....a higher power
> Than fancy gave assurance of some work
> Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
> Perhaps too there performed.

('The Prelude'. Book I : 77—80)

Work of glory

And what was to be this 'work of glory' ? It was to be *The Recluse*, a great philosophical poem, which in keeping with the aspirations of Coleridge was 'to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy after assuming the station of a man in repose, one whose principles were made up . . . . . .' It was his friend Coleridge, 'the guardian angel of Wordsworth's poetical genius , who both guided as well as inspired the poet to compose this great 'philosophic song' that was to be the monumental work of his life.

When then 'The Prelude'

Then how does *The Prelude* come in the picture at all ? For the answer let us hear from the poet himself. Let us quote some relevant portion from Wordsworth's Preface to the first edition of *The Excursion* in 1814 :

"Several years ago, when the author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. The work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished ; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature and Society ; and to be entitled *The Recluse*, as having for its principal subject the sensations and the opinions of a poet living in retirement. The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself ; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the anti-echapel has to the body of a Gothic church . . ."

Main purpose

Thus the main purpose of composing *The Prelude* seems to be crystal clear from Wordsworth's own statement in the above passage. It was to be his preparatory poem just to find out if his faculties were sufficiently matured to undertake the arduous task of composing the great philosophic poem that was to be the monumental work of his life. Now let us come to *The Prelude* itself. In Book I there are so many important lines where we find the poet very clearly stating his reasons for writing *The Prelude*. It was to be a sort of introduction to that great poem, *The Recluse*, as Wordsworth must be beginning to realise that a poem on his own early development might make a valuable introduction to his above masterwork.

Proceeding towards that 'chosen vale' in that splendid evening like a 'pilgrim resolute' the poet's soul :

> Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked
> Aeolian visitations : but the harp
> Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
> Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
> And lastly utter silence !

(Book I , Lines 95 - 99)

Hopes and disappointments

After settling down at his hermitage at Racedown the poet felt that he might be able to give poetic or visible expression to some vague fancies and longings that were drifting about aimlessly in his mind for many years. Alas ! the poet is sadly disappointed once more :

> ....Welcome light
> Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear
> And mocks me with a sky that ripens not
> Into a steady morning :

So we find that whenever the poet desires to tackle some exalted theme he finds 'impediments from day to day renewed'. Still Wordsworth does not absolutely give way to dejection and despair. For the time being the poet decides to give up his idea of a lofty theme and makes up his mind to remain satisfied with 'present gifts of humbler industry'. In fact, during 1798 Wordsworth wrote some modest type of poems like *The Cumberland Beggar*, *The Discharged Soldier* and also the nice shorter and simpler poems to be included in the *Lyrical Ballads* and *Peter Bell.*

Self-analysis and in quest of a theme

After this we find the poet again subjecting himself to severe self analysis, making a thorough investigation of his mind to find if he is fit enough for undertaking an arduous task of writing a great epic ; and the result seems to be much encouraging. Wordsworth had an ambitious soul and Milton was his poet-hero. He must leave behind some lofty work to bring ever-lasting fame and glory. So the poet is in quest of a suitable theme and suitable setting in time and place for his 'work of glory'. And first of all his mind turns to 'some old Romantic tale by Milton left unsung'. This signifies that Wordsworth's first cherished desire is to emulate Milton whom he considers to be his great ideal. Next we find the poet in quest of various other subjects. They are chivalry and great war-like deeds of medieval knights, the noble and brave exploits of great heroes like Mithridates, Odin, Sertorious, Dominique de Gourgues, Gustavas and the far-famed Scottish hero Wallace. The poet also feels that it would suit him better to invent a story from his own heart and finally :

> My last and favourite aspiration mounts
> With yearning towards some philosophic song
> Of truth that cherishes our daily life.
> ....
> immortal verse
> Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre ;

Mental conflicts and the memories of childhood days

But still the poet recoils from such an arduous task. He is hesitant to make a choice due to lack of confidence in his own

powers. He seeks consolation from the fond hope that advancing years will endow him with maturer power of thinking and clearer insight to compose such a lofty poem. Ultimately we find that all his mental conflicts and contradictions and his doubts and diffidence to undertake the great task of composing an exalted poem on a noble theme send the poet's mind back to those childhood days which he passed amid the most lovely and sublime sights and sounds of nature of the Lake District of England. So in the subsequent part of Book I (Ll. 270—612) we find that the transition to autobiographical incidents and recollections of unforgettable experiences of childhood days that contributed to the growth and development of poet's mind have been done with wonderful ease and naturalness.

Reviving and recreating experiences of childhood days

Both in Book I and Book II through vivid and minute descriptions of boyhood sports and pastimes like bathing, kite-sailing, skating, bird-snaring, expedition in stolen boat, boat-races and riding expeditions, the poet tells us of those incomparable experiences of his childhood when his 'sense and soul was one'. Helen Darbishire has truly observed : 'But he deliberately cultivated memory, he could live intensely in the past, he could revive and recreate ; and the chief part of his purpose in *The Prelude* is to recall and quicken into permanent life those pregnant moments. For they were, he, well knew, the making of him as a poet. Prof. Herbert Lindenberger, a critic of this age from U.S.A., also holds the same opinion when he says : 'But the repeated invocations of past visions in *The Prelude* are something other than inventions or imitations (terms drawn directly from the older rhetoric) of past actions ; they are above all an attempt to recreate and restore, by verbal means, a past order which can give substance to the future . And the poet himself tells us :

> Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
> And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
> The face of the moving year, even then
> I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
> Of curling mist, or from the laced plain
> Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

Revival of hope and confidence

Let us see now how far the poet has been able to achieve his main purpose. In the middle of the first Book we found the poet full of regrets as he was :

> Unprofitably travelling toward the grave
> Like a false steward who hath much received
> And renders nothing back

But at the end we find the same poet expressing his earnest hope that recollection of his childhood days may refresh his thoughts and restore the balance of his unsteady mind. Yes, Wordsworth has overcome his depressing mood of dejection and frustration. The act of composing of *The Prelude* had some sort of the rapturous effect on his mind. And before the very close the poet very confidently tells Coleridge : 'A dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius :

> One end at least hath been attained ; my mind
> Hath been revived,............

and then he hastens to add to remind him of his main purpose of writing this poem :

> I choose it rather at this time, than work
> Of ampler and more varied argument,
> Where I might be discomfited and lost :

That is why Wordsworth gives up his idea of beginning his great and highly ambitious epic-like poem, *The Recluse*, for a while. But the most surprising and ironic element in the matter is that the Gothic church of poet's dream was never completed excepting a few hundred lines of *The Excursion*, the intermediate part, and this 'preparatory poem', intended to serve as a portico to *The Recluse* became his 'work of glory', 'immortal verse—a monumental work of an extraordinary type from the holy pen of the high priest of nature.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. "The purpose of "The Prelude" may, indeed, be said to search out and seize, among the many seemingly alien and incongruous images of self cast up by reflection, the image of the poet's true being, of his slowly self realising individuality, of that in him in virtue of which he is a 'dedicated spirit". Illustrate this statement with reference to "The Prelude" Books I and II.

2. Explain and comment on Wordsworth's reasons for writing "The Prelude" instead of an epic narrative such as he was considered at the beginning of Book I.

9

Universal Interest of "The Prelude"

Long poem on Wordsworth's education

The Prelude was addressed to Coleridge who described it in the verse written in acknowledgement :

"An orphic song indeed
A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
To their own music chanted."

The story of Wordsworth's earlier life is told in *The Prelude*. It is "the long poem on my education," he says. It is a study in the growth of a poet's mind. It is of utmost interest to know what moulded the mind of Wordsworth before we study his works. *The Prelude* shows the way ; it is sign-board on which is written in bold letters. "This is the way to the chamber of Wordsworth's mind. This is the way to that workshop wherein great thoughts were given the shape of great poem." Every student of Wordsworth's poems is bound to be interested to have a glimpse inside that chamber. Poets educate mankind but let us see who educates those who educate us ; poets inspire us through their spontaneous utterances and heart-stirring feelings ; but let us also see who inspires them to utter what affects the inner springs of human heart.

Universal interest of the poem ; its message : 'Child is father of man'

"*The Prelude* has a message," says Wren Gardiner, "for future generations ; and that is, the influence of childhood on after life. Think back of your childhood, says Wordsworth, as an explanation of the problems of your life. The child is father of the man. Modern psychology has no other lesson. Thus what was intended to be purely personal became universal ; that is, infact, the test of a greater writer ; he begins from himself and then stretches on his personality to include the lives of many. It is a test of every great

writer that though this starting point with him is his own life what he writes has cnmprehensiveness. One person's experiences become experiences to which each human heart returns an echo. That is how great poetry becomes universal in its appeal.

Wordsworth describes the common lot of man

His poetry is a charm that takes us back to those golden times, when we, too, saw freshly and spontaneously and when our blood ran free. He summons us constantly with the finger of imagination to enjoy in spirit those early experiences and emotions on which he insists that the true life of man must be based.

Here are quoted some passages in which the poet speaks of childhood in moving terms and affirms how it is the very base on which the edifice of one's life can stand.

Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites are ours.
And they must have their food. Our childhood sits,
Our simple childhood sits upon a Throne
That hath more power than all elements,

('The Prelude' : Book V. Lines : 506-509)

Oh ! mystery of man, from what a depth,
Proceed thy honours I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands ; but this I feel
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give
Else never canst receive

('The Prelude' ; Book XII : Lines : 272-277)

Wordsworth's small poem 'Rainbow' contains the thought similar to the one expressed throughout in, *The Prelude*. In fact that thoght born of early experiences on the basis of this long poem. Manhood is the infant of childhood. This truth is not applicable to Wordsworth only ; it is true for each one of us. Whatever we are when children go a long way to indicate what we shall be as grown-ups. "Child shows the man as morning shows the day." Childhood is the golden period, the most impressionable period of one's life and it is then that though unperceived, man's future life is in the making.

A reference to childhood, as a moulder of maturer years and an inspirer of man in the later years of his life, is made by Wordsworth at the end of Book I of *The Prelude* :

'Meanwhile, my hope has been that I might fetch
Invigorating thoughts from former years,
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind
And haply meet reproaches, too, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
To honourable toil Yet should these hopes
Be Vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge, how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee

Harsh judgements, if I am so loth to quit
Those recollectad hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, and lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining : (Book I : Ll. 620-635)

Those early experiences, in which the expanding spirit is disciplined and inspired by awe and wonder, are the common lot of man. Every boy has experienced the same feelings of awe and reverence which both afflicted and consoled the boy Wordsworth, as he stole a boat and rowed out stealthily into the lake.

Attainment of just and noble life through nature

The Prelude describes the attainment of a just and noble life through contemplation of nature, in which, as in man the 'Infinite' stands revealed. Nature in Wordsworth's poetry is not regarded as a background for his pictures of men and women or as a mere mirror reflecting the feelings of human beings, (Tennyson does that), but rather as a wonderful power around us calming and influencing our souls. In the words of Herbert Read, "Wordsworth's philosophy is not restricted to a philosophy of Nature ; it is the theory of the Mind and its relation to the external world. The individual mind is exquisitely fitted to the external world and no less exquisitely the external world fitted to the Mind. It is a marriage of distinct essences ; and indeed the whole of Wordsworth's conception of Man and Nature can be conceived under such an analogy. The exquisite functioning of this inter-locked universe of Mind and Nature is for Wordsworth the highest theme for poetry." And that is the theme of "The Prelude", which poem is a sure pointer to this problem of Wordsworth's poetical philosophy. To grasp this point is to have the key to Wordsworth's entire interpretation of nature ; to miss it is to miss everything that is the most characteristic in that interpretation.

To Wordsworth, "Nature appears as a formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike, the sower in our hearts of the deep laid seeds of our feelings and beliefs. It speaks to the child in terms of emotions of its early years, and stirs the young poet to an ecstasy, the glow of which illuminates all his work and the rest of his life . . .this nature is a safe guide to wisdom and goodness ; it is instinct with the irradiating presence of the divine ; in his adoration of it, Wordsworth's creed is a mystical pantheism. Besides nature, the concrete humanity of the humble, of those who live in contact with it, is source of happy exaltation for the social philosophy of the poet." (Louis Cazamian)

For Wordsworth it is because of the essential kinship between the spiritual faculty in man and the indwelling soul of the universe—because the external world and the Mind are exquisitely fitted each to the other—that communion with Nature is possible', and through

such a communion we find, as Myer observes, 'an opening, if indeed thereby an opening, with the transcendental world' :

'Ah not in vain Ye Beings of the hills,
And ye that walk the wood and open heaths
By moon or star light, thus from my first dawn
Of childhood, did ye love to interwine
The passions that build up our human soul
Not with mean and vulgar works of man
But with high objects, with external things
With life and nature purifying thus
The elemenrs of feeling and thougnt
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beating of the heart,'

('The Prelude' : Ll. 403-413 Book I)

Wordsworth lays down a principle that Nature many a time chooses one from among the human beings, and. she did in the case of Lucy, and under her special care brings up that creature in an atmosphere, simple and calm, with a quiet mind in this world of turmoil :

Three years she grew in sun and shower.
Then Nature said 'A lovlier flower
On earth was never sown ;
This child I to myself will take ;
She shall be mine and I will make
A lady of my own.'

Then the poet tells us of a Nature's plan to bring up the child in the midst of . . . . . . "rock and plain" :

In earth and heaven in glade and bower.

By 'silent sympathy' shall the 'floating clouds' and 'the motions of the storms' lend to her state and grace respectively. The similar thought Wordsworth has expressed :

But I believe
That Nature, often times, when she would frame
A favoured Being, from his earliest dawn
Of infancy doth open up the clouds,
As at the touch of lightning, seeking him
With gentlest visitations ; not the less
Though haply aiming at the self-same end
Does it delight for sometimes to employ
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, and so she dealt with me.

('The Prelude' Book LI 362-7 I)

'The Prelude' speaks of the poet's genius in general

The Prelude undoubtedly deals with one poet, Wordsworth. But it would not be an untruth to assert that in addition to self-portraiture, the poet, as conceived in the poem, is one ideal character progressing towards a state of blessedness in which we shall be fit to write a great philosophicial poem. Note these lines :

'The poet gentle creature as he is,
Hath, like the lover,
His fit when he is neither sick or well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts.'

This passage could be of interest to every writer of poems who must have experienced difficulty in the management of his thoughts.

Poet's sincerity

To assert that the poem has a universal appeal is not to question Wordswroth's sincerity ; it is, on the contrary, to establish his greatness as a poet, A great poem—like *The Prelude*, could never have been written without the deepest sense of sincerity. It is the sincerity of great art that it does not limit itself merely the narrow field of a writer's personality ; it extends its limits widely and touches the border lines of life in general. Let us end with the remark of Legouis : "*The Prelude* is the unique autobiographical poem. It forms a necessary introduction to all work in the wider field, not only of Wordsworth's poetry as a whole, but also of modern English poetry in general."

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1, "Although 'The Prelude' is an autobiographical poem, yet it has a message for future generation i.e. the influence of childhood on after life." Discuss this statement in the light of Book I and II 'The Prelude'.

2 Legouis remarks : 'The Prelude' is the unique autobiographical poem. It forms a necessary introduction to all work in the wider field, not only of Wordsworth's poetry as a whole, but also of modern English poetry in general. Discuss this dictum with reference to the Books I and II of 'The Prelude.'

10

Role of 'Beauty' and 'Fear' in Wordsworth's Early Life

Introducion

In *The Prelude*, 'the finest fruit of Wordsworth's great creative period , we have the faithful record of the poet's inner life and emotional experiences enabling us to have a glimpse of the innermost recesses of his soul. De Quincey gave a very significant title for a passage selected from *The Prelude* for publication in *The Friend*: "Growth of genius from the influence of natural objects on the imagination in boyhood and early youth". And in *The Prelude* Wordsworth offers us a record of his mental and spiritual growth—'growth of genius from the influence of natural objects on the imagination . . . .' And the record starts from his very infant days when the poet 'held mute dialogues with his mother's heart'. 'It is the full intense life which he lived through his senses as a child and youth that he tries to recapture and record'. Even as a child of five the poet learnt to love the bright and blue Derwent flowing smoothly by side of their terrace walk as 'a tempting playmate'. As a child the poet came in close contact with nature with all her lovely and sublime sights and sounds, first at Cockermouth, his birth place and subsequently at Hawkshead in the valley of Esthwaite.

Benign influence of Nature on child's mind

So in Books I and II we get an authentic record of Wordsworth's childhood and boyhood experiences through various boyish sports and pastimes amid the beautiful or awe-inspiring natural surroundings. The benign influence of Nature to shape and mould his character and poetic personality had already started :

> Fair seed time had my soul, and I grew up
> Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.

And in these two books we are lucky to get an unforgettable recreation of his childhood's involvement in all the exciting sports and pastimes and the joys and fears which were their consequence.

How Nature effected her discipline

Let us now see how Nature effected her discipline on the growing boy—Wordsworth by providing occasions to evoke the emotions of pleasure aud fear. We shall also see that 'Nature taught him, through experience, three degrees of emotion : 'unmixed delight, troubled pleasure and pure fright'.

Delightful experiences

As regards unmixed delight we find the boy of five enjoying long spells of bath :

> "In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
> Made one long bathing of a summer's day ;
> Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
> Alternate, all a summer's day,.........

Sometimes he would run about in the sandy fields 'leaping through flowery graves of yellow rag-wort' At some other time we find him standing alone under the blue vault of the sky amidst enchanting rocks and hills aglow with the radiant glory of the sun. At such times the boy felt himself to be a Red Indian boy who from his mother's hut :

> Had run abroad in Wantonner's, to sport
> A naked savage, in the thunder shower.

Then the frosty season was perhaps the happiest time for the poet ; it was a happy-time for all, but for the poet :

> It was a time of rapture ;

The most delightful experience recalled by the poet is the exciting game of skating in the company of other young friends. The ringing sounds of their moving skates would be echoed by the leafless trees and the surrounding hills and the poet :

> ......Wheeled about,
> Proud and exulting like an untired horse
> That cares not for his home.

But we also find that from the noise and excitement of even such collective games the boy Wordsworth sometimes tore him away from his companions to chase away the fleeting reflection of a star before him or stand watching the earth and rocks turning round and round when they had stopped their playful whirling movements on the smooth surface of the ice.

Significance of 'fear'

As regards the experience of pure fright or troubled pleasure we have unique passages from the sensitive pen of the poet, passages probably unsurpassed in English literature. But the word 'fear' should not be taken in its usual literary sense. Here 'fear' is always

associated with a feeling of awe and wonder. 'Wordsworth is not advocating either sensationalism or brutality as an aid to spiritual development. He is thinking rather of the element of fear that may exist in such emotions as awe, bewilderment, wonder and possibly, love.'

Discipline of pain or fear

The bird-nesting episode nicely illustrates the experience of pleasure mixed with fright. The poet and his companions used to move about just like robbers in quest of high places to rob birds's nests of their eggs. And sometimes he hung alone above the nest of a raven at a high altitude in a very precarious position and then his delight and excitement was much tempered by a sense of great awe of peril :

> While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
> With what strange utterance did the loud dry to wind,
> Blow through my ear ! the sky seemed not a sky
> Of earth—and with what motion moved the cloud !

In the bird-snaring episode the poet has nicely described his first experience of pure fright. During their night wanderings sometimes a strong desire overpowered his better reason and he would catch hold of a bird which happened to be trapped in the snare of some other person and then came Nature's severer intervention :

> ......and when the deed was done
> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Then we get the superb stolen 'boat episode' the best illustration of Nature s 'impressive discipline of fear'. This is one of the most celebrated passages from the sensitive pen of the high priest of nature :

> It was an act of stealth
> And troubled pleasure.

When the stolen boat started moving over the smooth lake, there came echoing sounds, rather sounds of warning, from the mountain sides. After sometimes, to his great dismay, he found a huge and black peak rearing its head from behind the uneven range of hills. To the poet it seemed to be an aweful and a strange living being and :

> I struck and struck again,
> A d growing still in stature the given shape
> Towered up between me and the stars and still,
> For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
> And measured motion like a living thing,
> Strode after me-

And afterwards, for a long period, the poet's mind was haunted during the day as well as at night by huge and powerful forms and shapes whose mode of life seemed mysterious and beyond the knowledge of human beings. All these illustrate how Nature's 'impressive discipline of fear has also been moulding his personality since the poet's childhood days.

Influence of David Hartley and associationism

As regards the discipline of pain and fear, Wordsworth might have been influenced to some extent by the eighteenth century philosopher David Hartley and his associationism. Hartley and other empiricist philosophers laid great stress on the early background and environment and expressed the view that the character of a man develops during the childhood and youth as a direct result of his physical experiences and the feelings of pleasure and pain from such experiences. Whatever may be the case Wordsworth is a poet first and it seems he might have used associationism to transcend the associationists. To the poet wonder is always associated with fear ; and in *The Prelude* we often find fear associated with sublime forms. And if these forms or images are grand and beautiful enough they somehow ennoble the emotions they evoke. So towards the end of Book I of *The Prelude* we get these illuminating lines that clearly tell us how the poet's personality was shaped and moulded by Nature's impressive discipline of pain and pleasure :

By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness,
So frequently repeated, and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of things forgotten; these same scenes so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day was distant, did became
Habitually dear, and all their forms
And changeful colours by visible links
Were fastened to the affections. (Book I—602-12).

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1 "Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up ! Fostered alike by beauty and fear."
What do you understand to the value of 'fear' in Wordsworth's life ?

2. What is the role played by 'fear' and 'beauty' in Wordsworth's 'The Prelude' Books I and II ?

11

Is Wordsworth Vain in "The Prelude"?

In the very post-preamble of Book I of *The Prelude* we get these memorable lines from Wordsworth :

> ......poetic numbers came
> Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
> A renovated spirit singled ou ,
> Such hope was mine, for holy services (Book I. 51-54)

Can a person be absolutely vain or indulge in egotism when he feels himself to be—'A renovated spirit singled out. . . . . . for holy services' ?

We also find the poet writing to Sir George Beaumont explaining to him why he began the work.

Not self-conceit but real humility

'It is not self-conceit that has induced me to do this, but real humility. I began the work because I was unprepared to treat any more arduous subject, and diffident of my own powers'. Well, can a poet be vain and an abject egotist when he unabashedly confesses his diffidence about his own powers and abilities. It is 'real humility' that has induced him to undertake the composition of *The Prelude*.

Why this a preparatory poem ?

Then what was that 'arduous task' which the poet was unable to undertake ? This was to be the monumental work of his life, *The Recluse*, 'a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature and Society'. And in his Preface to the first edition of *The Excursion* in 1814 the poet clearly stated his main purpose to undertake the task of writing *The Prelude*.

The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself.

Doubts and diffidence

And the different books of *The Prelude*, specially the first book is replete with lines and passages revealing Wordsworth's sense of humility and his doubts and diffidence to undertake the arduous task of constructing 'literary work that might live'. On his way to Race-down to Bristol—

......a higher power
Than fancy gave assurance of some work
Of glory there forthwith to be begun
Perhaps too there performed. (Book I : Ll. 77-80)

And on that 'splendid evening' the poet's soul once more wanted to measure its own power and ability. It was not without thoughts or inspiration that seemed to play upon his soul as wind on the Aeolean harp—

......but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispered straggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence ! (Book I, Ll. 96-99)

The poet's mind then made sincere attempts to 'grapple with some noble theme' 'but unfortunately—Vain is her wish ; where ever she turns, she finds impediments from day to day renewed.

So the poet accepts his defeat for the time being and is humble enough to tell us :

And now it would content me to be yielded up
Of humbler industry. (Book I : Ll. 132-34)

To take up the work of glory in mellower years

And after a fruitless quest for some appropriate theme for his work of glory the poet becomes fully conscious of his lack of maturity and frankly tells us :

But from this aweful burthen I full soon
Take refuge and beguile myself with trust
That mellower years will bring a riper mind
And clearer insight, (Book I : Ll. 234-37)

A poet, who so frankly admits his defeat and is honest and sincere enough to point out his own drawbacks and deficiencies, his mental conflicts and contradictions can never be a vain egotist.

Nature moulded his personality on right lines

The other great thing about Wordsworth is that he was born and brought up in the lap of mother Nature amidst the most beauti-

ful and sublime natural surroundings. And Nature took upon herself the task of moulding the mind and soul of this sensitive child :

> Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
> Fostered alike by beauty and by fear :
> Much favoured in my birth place, and no less
> In that beloved vale to which erelong
> We were transplanted ; (Book I Ll. : 301-305)

Sober lessons from rowing competitions

Then, while describing their rowing competitions over the Windermere lake in Book II, Wordsworth tells us that such pastimes with happy endings never gave rise to any undesirable sense of rivalry or jealousy :

> ......Then the pride of strength,
> And the vain-glory of superior skill,
> Were tempered ; thus was gradually produced
> A quiet independence of the heart.
>
> (Book II : Lines 69-72).

And in this book we also find the boy Wordsworth longing for calmner and sober type of pleasures, and only those sports and pastimes that were closely attached to beautiful sights and sounds of nature seemed to be really enjoyable to him :

> And every boyish spent, less grateful else
> And languidly pursued,
>
> (Book II : 53-54).

Thankfulness to mother Nature for the healthy growth of his mind

In fact, the poet was very fortunate in one respect and for this in so many lines and passages, he did not fall to express his deep sense of thankfulness to mother Nature for all the means—sometimes pleasant and sometimes painful-employed by her for the healthy growth of his mind and soul. And if he had any sense of pride in him, he tells us with modest pride that he had grown up—

> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man.
> But with high objects, with enduring things—
> With life and Nature—
>
> (Book I : 408-10).

A man who ultimately attained the peace and serenity of his soul due to all the benign and beneficial influences exerted on him by mother Nature could never grow up to be a vain and self-conceited person.

Wordsworth of "The Prelude" can never be vain

Of course, Wordsworth admitted that 'it was a thing unprecedented in literary history that a man should talk so much about himself.' But then he also said : 'I began the work because I was un-

prepared to treat any more arduous subject, and diffident of my own powers'. As a school boy Wordsworth might have some sense of ego and in the circle of his friends and close relations he might have been to some extent egotistical, but Wordsworth of *The Prelude* is never vain and egotistical. Gibbon, while turned to the history of himself, became rather vulgar and absurd. Even great Goethe proved himself to be a bore and a snob while "professing to put to us the 'Truth and Poetry' which nursed his greatness". About Wordsworth of *The Prelude* we may conclude with the following words of great praise and regard from Prof. Garrod : "But the author of *The Prelude* was born, one might think, of a mountain or a river, rather than of human parents ; and everything that he has to tell us of himself meets us like a clean breeze, carrying none of the casual impurities of social and intellectual competition."

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. "It is not self-conceit that has induced me to do this, but real humility. Discuss this dictum of Wordsworth in the light of the Books I and II of 'The Prelude'
2. Is Wordswoth vain in writing 'The Prelude' ? Illustrate.

12

Wordsworth : The Poet of Solitude in "The Prelude"

'I was taught to feel perhaps too much
The self-sufficing power of solitude."

('The Prelude' : Book II : Lines 76-77

The poet of *The Prelude* is the poet of solitude. 'Far from all resorts of mirth' did Wordsworth commune with objects of Nature, shared their solitariness, by cutting himself off from the noisy and crowded city life. The poets in general have craved for quiet and solitude. "Solitude is the nurse of contemplation". Milton said so in *Comus* ; and if a poet, as Shelley said, is to remain "hidden in the light of thought" which is only a definition of contemplation, he is to feed his mind on contemplation. But there is a difference in Wordrworth and other poets. The other poets craved for solitude ; Wordsworth actually enjoyed it. It is not that Wordsworth alone sought solitude : solitude also, wanted Wordsworth. It was, again, an unwritten bond between Wordsworth and solitude. He experienced :

Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
A forestate, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

It was this 'calm' of Nature that drew Wordsworth to hills, plains and thickets, where he went alone. In *The Prelude* Book I, the poet describes how he "had seen nine summers." It was his joy :

To wander half the right among the cliffs
And the smooth Hollows, where the wood cock ran
Along the open turf......moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head ; I was alone
And seem'd to be a trouble to the peace
That was among them. (Lines 314-316 ; 321-324)

The thought is so subtle and it is delicately expressed. Wordsworth's visits to these lonely spots, where peace ruled, appeared to

him to disturb that peace. Noise is not known to Nature. Those who wish to drink from the ever-flowing sweet waters of the springs of solitude have to approach solitude with that state of mind with which William Wordsworth approached it. Solitude invited Wordsworth to spend his life in its company ; he could not resist the temptation. He heard the call and made a response. The previous moments of the dawn of his life he spent in solitariness.

"Partly because he is the poet of mountains he is, even more pre-eminently", says A.C. Bradley, "the poet of solitude. For there are tones in the mountain voice scarcely audible except in solitude and the reader whom Wordsworth's greatest poetry baffles could have no better advice offered him than to do what he has probably never done in his life—to be on a mountain alone." A passage from *The Prelude* Book I finely illustrates Bradley's viewpoint :

> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod. (Book I. Ll. 329-332)

The poet describes how when he played with his companions 'along the polished ice' :

> "Not seldom from the uproar I retired
> Into a distant bay, or sportively
> Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
> To cut across the image of a star
> That glean'd upon the ice ; (Book I. Ll. 474-478)

Wordsworth relates :

> ......oft times did I quit
> My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves
> And as I paced alone the level fields
> Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
> With which I had been conversant the mind
> Dropped not. (Book III. Ll. 91-96)

The entire *Prelude*—as the rest of his poetry—is full of passages from the poet's pen that reveal how much this "worshipper of Nature" loved solitariness." In Book II he talks of solitude as more active even than" 'Best Society' (Ll. 295) and remarks in the same book :

> "......I would walk alone
> Under the quiet stars, and at that time
> Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
> To breathe an elevated mood, by form
> Or image unprofaned ; and I would stand
> If the night blackened with a coming storm
> Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
> The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
> Or make their dim abode in distant winds,
> Thence did I drink the visionary power."

"But for Wordsworth not this solitude only," says Bardley, "but all solitude and all things solitary had an extraordinary fascination." In *The Prelude*, Book I, the poet speaks of "soul of lonely places" (L. 492) and makes mention of "the solitary cliffs" (L. 484), "the solitary hills" (L. 329) "forlorn cascades" (L. 515); again in Book III, the poet talks of "solitude of lovely places" (L. 231). In Book VII, the poet speaks about "solitary hills" (L. 6), and "lonely, brooks" (L. 562). Everything that is solitary, lonely, forlorn secluded, alone has a charm for Wordsworth.

In Book IV, the poet describes his chance meeting with a "man more meagre" who was "clad in military garb." Note Wordsworth's description of him :

> "He was alone,
> Had no attendant, neither Dog, nor staff,
> Nor knap sack ; in his very dress appeared
> A desolution, a simplicity ak n to solitude."

Talking of Wordsworth's love for loneliness, Bradley observes : "What is lonely is a spirit. To call a thing lonely or solitary is, with him to say that it opens a bright or solemn vista into infinity. Solitude to Wordsworth did not mean as it means to us : emptiness absence of life. To us, life means visible movement of creatures. He perceived, as the great among mankind have perceived, a spirit in solitude. Is that spirit absent among the crowds ? No, it is all pervading ; but in the midst of throng and the noise, its speech becomes inaudible to us. Thus he retired at intervals to the solitary objects of Nature to gain from their speaking presence an exaltation of mind and delight on which he fed his mind.

This should not lead us to the conclusion that Wordsworth hated society or loathed human company. He is in a significant way the poet of man. He sings with joy's end compassion of the affections of the common life, of the 'Solitary Reaper' whom he found single in the field ; alone "she cut and bound the grain." The poet's description of the soldier in Book IV is sympathetic. Nature whom Wordsworth worshipped is interested in man ; how could then Wordsworth, Nature's devotee, be indifferent to man ? He tells us :

> "Yet could I only cleave to solitude
> In lonely places ; if a throng was near
> That way I leaned by nature ; for my heart
> Was social, and loved idleness and joy."

(Book III. Ll. 230-233)

His love for Nature, whose charm he experienced in solitude, made the poet love man because Nature and man's mind stood in an invisible bond. The Book VII of *The Prelude* deals with "love of Nature leading to love of Man." In the closing lines of this Book,

addressed to Coleridge, Wordsworth shows in what relation he viewed Nature and Man :

"Thus from a very early age, O Friend !
My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn
To human mind, and to the good and ill
Of human life ; Nature had led me on ;
And oft amid the "busy hum" I seemed
To travel independent of her help,
As if I had forgotten her ; but no,
The World of human-kind out-weighed not hers
In my habitual thoughts ; the scale of love
Though filling daily, still was light, compared
With that in which her mighty objects lay,'

(Book VII. Ll. 676-686)

In the same Book he speaks of "sanctity of Nature given to man" and says :

"......Thus my heart was early introduced
To an un-conscious love and reverence
Of human nature ; hence human form
To me became an index of delight
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.

(Book VII. Ll. 277-281)

Wordsworth viewed man and scanned him in the light of the visions which solitude blessed him with.

CRITICAL QUESTION

1. Is the poet of "The Prelude" is the poet of solitude ? Discuss.

13

Imagination : the Soul of "The Prelude"

Growth of a genius—a record of inner life

We have a very significant title from De Quencey for a passage selected from *The Prelude* for publication in *The Friend* :

> 'Growth of a genius from the influence of natural objects on the imagination in boyhood and early youth.' What a comprehensive title from a small passage !. And we can safely append this illuminating and comprehensive title to the whole of *The Prelude*, as in this poem Wordsworth offers us a history of his mental and spiritual growth —'Growth of Genius from the influence natural of objects on the imagination .....'

Now what is the central theme of *The Prelude* ? It is nothing but a record of that inner life out of which Worthworth's poetry grew. "It is a long poem, and a great poem, conveying high meditation on a basis of personal experience. It has a unity of design which depends upon the essential integrity. The subject is not 'My Life', but the 'Making of a Poet". And, in fact, the unity of the poem lies in Wordsworth's doctrine of imagination. We must remember that this doctrine is basic to the interpretation of his own experience in his great political or spiritual autobiography. Since his childhood's days, Nature has filled his mind with sensations and impressions ; and these developed into passions of youth and ideas of maturity in later years. So from the beginning to the end, we find him tracing the growth and development of this divine faculty and telling us how senses become a gateway to the imaginative mind through which it enters the realm of spirit. It has been made clear by the poet himself in the concluding (Book XIV) book of this great poem :

> ......we have traced the stream
> From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
> Its natural murmur ; followed it to light
> And open day ; accompanied its course

Among the ways of Nature, for a time
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulphed,
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
The works of man and face of human life. (XIV : 194-202)

A history of the development of poet's imagination

So, the poet tells his friend Coleridge that imagination has been the source of inspiration of their great poetic activity and so he has traced the source of this stream of imagination from the subconscious mind from where the soft sound of its origin can be heard by us indistinctly. We get explicit and explanatory statements of the poet's theory of imagination in Book XII, XIII and XIV. In his inspired poetical language he has tried to tell us in these Books what imagination is and what it does. But from the very first Book it is clear to us that the whole of *The Prelude* is a history of the poet's imagination. For Wordsworth, for the growth of his mind, we already know that 'the experience begins in sensation and ends in thought.

Begins in sensation and ends in thought

Let us take up the famous boating episode from Book I :

"It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure."

When the stolen boat started moving over the smooth surface of the lake, there came echoing sounds, rather sounds of warning from the mountain sides. After sometime, to his great dismay, he found a huge and black peak rearing its head from behind the uneven range of hills. And then we find how this sense-experience ends in such thoughts as recorded in these beautiful lines :

Wisdom and spirit of the universe !
Thou soul that art the eternity of thought
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou interwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul,
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things
With life and Nature—

(Book I : 401-410)

The poet's bird-nesting adventure that led him to hang 'Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass' also ends in such exalting thoughts :

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music , there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discrodant elements, makes them cling together
In one society.

(Book I : 340-344)

Sense experience leading to emotional experiences

In Book II, the poet tells us about a higher stage of development in the growth of his mind and in his attitude towards nature. In this stage sense-experiences lead to deeper emotional experiences. So after their memorable visit from the tavern, 'The White Lion', the poet and his companions used to row back, just before the night-fall, over the shadowy lake in a lazy mood. And while the 'Ministrel of the Troop', Robert Greenwood, would be left alone on a rock and play upon his flute :

> ......Oh, then, the calm
> And dead still water lay upon my mind
> Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
> Never before so beautiful, sank down
> Into my heart, and held me like a dream !
> Thus were my sympathies enlarged and thus
> Daily the common range of visible things
> Grew dear to me :

(Book II : Ll. 170-177).

He then began to love the sun not for its life-giving power but because it bathed the hills in its radiant beauty at dawn and touched the Western hills with its golden finger before it set in the West.

Human mind—creator and receiver both

Although not so very explicitly as in Books XIII or XIV, we get some of the very finest lines telling about the mysterious faculty of imagination while making some philosophic observations on childhood and the child-mind. The child is no outcast, 'bewildered and depressed' :

> For feeling, has to him imparted power
> That through the growing faculties of sense
> Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
> Creates, creator and receiver both,
> Working but in alliance with the works
> Which it beholds.

(Book II : Ll. 255-260).

Thus human mind, rather our imagination is 'creator and receiver both'.

In those days, Wordsworth moved in the midst of grand and lovely scenes of nature with a feeling of deep religious love which was fed and strengthened by the changing seasons of nature with all its sunshines and snow' with its cool shade and heavy showers and then the poet felt as if 'A plastic power Abode with me' and had a feeling as if :

> ......An auxiliary light
> Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
> Bestowed new splendour, the melodious birds,
> The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
> Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
> A like dominion, and the midnight storm
> Grew darker in the presenee of my eye :

(Book II : Ll. 268-74).

This is how a poet's mind becomes 'creator and receiver both'.

Sense experience leading to mystic experiences

Thus before the poet attained the age of fourteen, we find the poet's sense-experience leading him to deep mystic experiences and thus enabling him to 'see into the life of things.' :

> Oft in these moments such a holy calm
> Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
> Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
> Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in the mind.

Thus we find that all the beautiful and sublime sights, sounds and objects of nature engendered in him an exalted and ecstatic mood and thence the poet drank 'the visionary powers' or creative sensibility. To the poet 'sense and imagination are two extremes in the scale of poetic, or *spiritual* apprehension'.

Imagination and Taste was impaired and restored

In Books XII and XIII, and to some extent in Book XIV, Wordsworth tells us how his Imagination and Taste was impaired and restored. But in these Books we also find the didactic and moral tone of the poet asserting itself, probably to the detriment to his poetic genius to some extent. In Book XII we get such memorable lines as :

> So feeling comes in aid
> Of feeling, and diversity of strength
> Attends us, if but once we have been strong,
> Oh ! mystery of man, from what a depth
> Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
> In simple childhood something of the base
> On which thy greatness stands ; but this I feel
> That from thyself it comes; that thou must give,
> Else never can it receive.

Poet's theory of Imagination

But, in fact, the poet gives us in the concluding Book XIV, an explicit statement of his theory of imagination in his own poetic language after his mystic experience or vision that had on the top of Snowdown mountain :

> There I beheld the emblem of a mind
> That feeds upon infinity, that broods over
> The dark abyss, intent to hear
> Its voices issuing forth to silent light
> In one continuous stream, a mind sustained
> By recognitions of transcendent power,
> In soul of more than mortal privilege. **(Book IV : Ll. 70-77)**

So, the poet saw the symbol of a mind that derives sustenance from the Infinite. To him, it was the symbol of a mind that can convert

simple sense-impressions into ideas and images and that exhibits itself as immortality in the soul. And in a subsequent passage, the poet finally tells us while discussing about spiritual love that sanctifies our earthly passions :

> This spiritual love acts not nor can exist
> Without imagination ; which, in truth,
> Is but another name for absolute power
> And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
> And reason in her most exalted mood.
>
> (Book XIV : Ll, 189-93)

Thus the poet believes that the spiritual love and the imagination are interdependent, and it is not opposed to reason, as it combines reason with emotion, feeling with thought and ultimately converting them into inspiration that exalts and elevates our mind. And we may say that to the poet's imagination represents the power of the soul to see into 'the life of things' and to realise complete unity and oneness of life. We may now conclude by quoting the very illuminating lines on this divine faculty by Prof. Garrod :

"The imaginative faculty is that faculty which, by binding the things of sense to the moral affections, transmutes them, makes them of part of poetry—whether the poetry of book or of life—and, in so doing, links us with the things in the world which are permanent, and assures us of immortality. The vision of the senses melts and dissolves, but it melts into the revelation of permanent super-sensual realities. The fashion of the world passes away ; but it fades before a mind conscious of an order of things fashioned immortality."

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. "In 'The Prelude' we see [the imaginative working at two stages, first on the incident (e.g. the stealing of the boat) itself, and then on recollection where it takes on a universal significance. In this way the poem illustrates the source and operation of the imagination." Discuss and illustrate this statement with reference to the Books I and II of 'The Prelude'.
2. That do you understand by Wordsworth's theory of imagination from 'The Prelude'.

14

"The Prelude" and the Poetic Experience

Every poem records a poetic experience ; in fact what is termed 'poem' is only another word for *poetic experience*. This poetic experience is the relation between the mind of the poet and his world-in which he moves, and observes, experiences, acts and lives. Such a poetic experience goes to constitute *the poetic personality*. Such a poetic experience varies with each poet ; such an experience gets formed in the poet's mind, which is different with each poet and is born in relation to a poet's world, which will not necessarily be the world of those who practise the same art. Hence every poetic experience is invariably, a personal experience. A poet's world is not detached from the outer world of everybody else. In this God's world, a poet constructs his own world from the material supplied by his Creator. This new world depends on imaginative sensibility, individual sympathy and insight of each poet.

According to this theory every work of art 'offers to any one who wishes to examine it the principles necessary to form judgement of it', and there is no such thing as objective poetry'. What we term objective poetry is also 'a poetic experience.' This poetic expereince has to be significant ; hence all art is selection ; we receive a variety of experiences and human mind reacts to various things, but when the experience stirs a poet's feelings strongly, he moves and he sings. His song becomes a poem. Sucn choicest experiences alone become poetic experience. Secondly, the experience is personal. "It is because his experience is significant that the poet is urged to express it, and we are willing to receive it," says Abercrombie. He further adds that experience, however, cannot but be personal; and the more we feel of the poet's personality in the experience his art transmits to us the better we understadd the nature of the experience to which we submit and the force of the significance it carries." For what we mean by the poet's personality—that is the personality we feel in his art. We mean that peculiarly-individual relationship with his world, inner and

outer, in which the spirit of the man most naturally and profoundly and completely lives. In this central habit of experience his poetry originates: out of this general source proceeds those particular experiences which, when he has expressed them in words, we call his poems." The particular experiences are rivulets that get their water from the main river. i.e. "the general sources," which are the poetic experiences as well.

Viewed in the light of these observations *The Prelude* stands out pre-eminently a specimen of Wordsworth's art. The fourteen Books of this great autobiographical poem, with vast epic-structure and sublime expression, contain the significant experience in the life of Wordsworth; the experienec is based on the impressions that from the dawn of his life began to influence the poet and shaped his personality in a particular mould. To quote Abercrombie again : "He wrote, *The Prelude* and the subject and the art of *The Prelude* combine to guide us precisely that central habit of experience out of which all his poetry comes.........Its (*The Prelude's*) inspiration is Wordsworth's intention to reveal the formation and nature of the inmost habit of experience which made him the poet he was—that unique relationship between his mind and his world in which he most deeply and vividly lived and which constitutes his poetic personality.' The subjects of other epics are outside the immediate sphere of the poet's own life. *Paradise Lost* derives its source from the Bible. *The Divine Comedy*, though it contains some references to Dante's life, yet it deals with problems which are outside the personal life of Dante. Virgil's *Aenied* is a national epic which celebrates an empire, and describes the adventures of its hero, Aenies. But the subject of *The Prelude* is, in its entirety, the poet himself. Wordsworth has recorded him significant experience, the experience which went to make him what he later on became his own. His world is the world of the nature ; and his poetic experience is the indissoluble bond that exists between him and nature. Wordsworth arrived at this poetic experience between man's incidents of his own life, where he saw and felt what he wrote.

"Oh ye rocks and streams,
And that still spirit shed from evening air !
Even in this joyous time I sometims felt
Your presence."

(Book II : Lines 131-134)

Wordsworth talked to rocks, streams and the quiet spirits of the evening air as we talk to our friends and relations and felt their nearness as we feel the human presence. The impression that he received from these external objects of nature were not stray impressions ; it was not that he endeavoured to receive such an influence, but it was the aim of nature to bring Wordsworth under her benignant influence :

"Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled my mind with beauteous forms or grand.
And made me love them." (Book I: Lines 572 574)

Note the words "and made me love them." Nature has become the chief actor. A similar thought is expressed in his small but popular poem *Written Early Spring*.

> To her fair works did Nature link
> The human soul that through me ran,"

Here, too, nature is described as the cheif doer. Initiative is taken by Nature in establishing a link between "her fair works" and the poet's individual soul. The same thought is expressed in Book IV

> "I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be else sinning greatly
> A dedicated spirit." (Lines 341-344)

Out of such experiences as these originates Wordsworth's poetic experience. The origin is within his own self, but Wordsworth generalises the same, so that his individual experience comes to be shared by the readers. That is how in great works of art the particular becomes the universal. Another aspect of this poetic experience of Wordsworth is that though he enjoyed the sights af nature and his mind responded to these impressions. Natural objects, were pleased in giving joys to those whom they contacted. In the opening lines of *The Prelude* Book I, Wordsworth sings of the joy that the 'gentle breeze that blows from the green fields and from the clouds and from the sky' gives to him; but the poet says that the breeze was "half conscious of the joy" it gave to the poet. Commenting on this Abercrombie remarks : "The experience is not simple of the poet's own awareness of receiving pleasures, it is also of the breeze's awareness of giving pleasure." The entire thing is reciprocal. The giver of the joy delights in giving and the receiving of that joy is equally happy in receiving it. Let us refer to *The Education of Nature*. It is a wonderful poem wherein Wordsworth has very beautifully, in a simple language and moving verses, described the consciouness of Nature in moulding human mind. In the second stanza, Nature says about Lucy :

> "Myself will to my darling be
> Both law and impulse : and with me
> The girl, in rock and plain
> In earth and heaven, in glade and bower
> Shall feel an overseeing power
> To kindle or restrain "

The passages from other poems have been quoted just to show that there is a uniformity of thought in great part of the poetry of Wordsworth a trait peculiar to him. This is his "poetic experience" an everlasting but invisible link between human mind and Nature, based on poet's own experience during his childhood, boyhood and youthful years. "Wordsworth is often called the poet of Nature. He is the poet of many things besides; but it is in his relationship with Nature that

his poetic inspiration originates, and the history of the relationship is the subject of *The Frelude*." (Abercrombie) He quotes from the same critic "*The Prelude* is thus typical of the art of Wordsworth. And it is typical of the man. It not only tells us of these remarkable experiences, it tells us also how he became capable of them; and to this he was continually looking back. Over and over again, in the poetry that we value most in him, the glory of the past shines upon the present and transfigures it. To a quite remarkable degree, past experience in him was living energy, either interpreting the present, or dividing his attention between the senses, immediate delight and the Mind's internal heaven." The idea can be illustrated from the following passage:

"With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel
In that enormous city's turbulent world
Of man and things, what benefit I owed
To thee, and those domains of rural peace,
Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
Was opened." (*The Prelude*, Book VII Lines 70-75)

In these lines a past experience is made a 'living energy' on the present. Here is another passage :

"From early days,
Beginning not long after the first time
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart
I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby this infant sensibility,
Great brithright of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained."

(*The Prelude*, Book II : Lines 265-272)

Thus there exists between Wordsworth and his world and ultimate and perfect relation. This relation which can be termed the central poetic experience has its beginning in the poet's childhood,this gets widened and deepened during the days of his boyhood and youth it attains maturity in manhood. Thus *The Prelude*, very rightly, becomes a record of the growth of the central poetic experience which made Wordsworth the poet he was. In Book III (Ll. 167-176) the poet has referred to tnis point :

And hero, O Friend ! have I retraced my life
Up to an eminence, and told a tale
Of matters which not falsely may be called
The glory of my youth. Of genius,
Creation and divinity itself
I have been speaking, for my theme has been
What passed within me. Not of outward things.
Done visible for other minds, words, signs,
Symbols or actions, but of my own heart
Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.

"This, then is Wordsworth's subject," says Abercrombie, "this creative harmony. Often when we try to make out in a poet's work what I have called his poetic personality, this man's theme or motive,

we allow ourselves to speak in general terms and sometimes vaguely enough of his subject. We might say Milton's subject is man's temptation, that Dante's is the justice of divine love disposing all things. If we speak so of Wordsworth we must say that his subject is poetic experience itself. By the expression of this, his art is inspired, by this intention it must be judged. With such a subject the accusation of egoism is to be expected. But Wordsworth's egoism is never egoism asserted as such; it is but the necessary locus of poetic experience. His poetry does not give us his personality simply because it was his own, but because of that harmony of mind and nature which his personality had become. In all poetry, the subject whatever it may be, carries with it something of the poet's peculiar sense of relationship between himself and his world."

CRITICAL QUESTION

1. How does a poetic experience constitue a poetic personality? What are Wordsworth's experiences revealed in *The Prelude*?

15

"The Prelude" : Book I Critical Summary

At the very outset it would be wise for us to remember that *The Prelude* written by Wordsworth should never be treated as an autobiography in the usual sense of the word. It is not at all a systematic account of the poet's early life, though he could not but choose this autobiographical form. This great poem—'the finest fruit of Wordsworth's great creative period'—is to be treated as the faithful record of the growth and development of the poet's mind, 'fostered alike by beauty and fear,' enabling us to have a glimpse of the innermost recesses of the poet's soul. Its very sub-title. *The Growth of a Poet's Mind*, amply justifies the statement that it records the life of Wordsworth's poetic personality. The following lines quoted from the poet's Preface to *The Excursion* will make the point crystal clear :

> The preparatory point is biographical, and conducts the history of the author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself.

In the first book of *The Prelude* we get the autobiographical account of the poet's childhood and school time. But in the introduction—Ll. 1 to 269- the poet, before narrating his pleasant or painful experiences of childhood days, first tells us how he was led to write this great poem.

Sense of joy and relief : The opening lines (1 to 45) of *The Prelude*, Book I, express the deep sense of joy and relief that Wordsworth felt after leaving the vast city of London for Racedown in Dorsetshire where the poet and his sister Dorothy settled in the autumn of 1795. In that huge city he languished for long just like 'a discontented sojourner'. But in that chosen valley of Racedown, just in the lap of mother nature, the poet is as free as a bird to settle

down wherever he likes. Gone is the burden of his unnatural life in London. He can now shake off the heavy load of despair and dejection from his soul.

Inspiration and the urge for poetic faculty : The mild breeze, 'the sweet breath of heaven', seemed to have aroused in him a corresponding breeze of inspiration, engendering in his soul great creative energy that would lead the poet to fresh and lofty poetic activity. Here we find Wordsworth, as usual, imparting a living personality to the breeze, a lifeless object of nature, as it seems to be somewhat aware of the great joy that it brings to the poet's mind. The fresh urge for poetic productivity is indomitable and under its powerful influence he will be able to compose regularly, poems of worship, verses of a lofty inspirational order.

Verses come spontaneously : Then the poet addresses his dear friend, Coleridge. It was Coleridge who constantly encouraged the poet to undertake the composition of a great philosophic poem to be called *The Recluse* and tells him that he has never been in the habit of transforming a present joy into a subject for writing poetry. Here we may recollect the theory of poetry propounded by Wordsworth in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. It is the confirmed opinion of the poet that "poetry is the spontaneous overflov of powerful feelings ; it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility." But on that day, on the day of his journey from Bristol to Racedown, verses come to him spontaneously and under the influence of gentle breeze, both external and internal, he made a prophecy that in the days to come he would create poetry of the most sublime order. He felt that his was a chosen spirit, chosen by Nature of God himself, to accomplish such a noble task.

Selection of a known valley and a feeling of confidence : With great hopes for the future and in a happy mood the poet moved on. So many thoughts were entertained by him for the choice of a place where he could take up his abode, but they were ultimately discarded. Finally, he selected a known Valley, made up his mind to settle down in a Cottage in that lovely place where he reached after a pleasant journey of three days. On the way, resting amidst the beautiful sights and sounds of nature he felt assured that he would, at last, be able to undertake some exalted work of undying fame and perhaps be able to accomplish the great task. It was a lovely evening and his soul once more wanted to measure its own power and ability. His thoughts or inspiration seemed to play upon his soul as wind on the Aeolean harp. But soon it was clear that his soul was deceived, as it failed to respond to the wind of inspiration to produce a harmonious pattern. But after settling down at his hermitage at Racedown he had a keen desire to prepare himself for some fixed project or plan. He should either gather a new store of knowledge

or rescue his old stock of knowledge by some timely action, from total oblivion. With that still loftier hopes arose in his heart, some vague fancies and longings were drifting about aimlessly in his mind for many years. The poet felt that he might be able to give poetic or visible expression to all of them, enabling him to create, in the end, some noble and glorious work of art. But alas ! the poet is sadly disappointed once more. The dim light of hope does not brighten up at all. Whenever he desires to tackle some exalted theme he faces serious obstacles and hindrances. Still Wordsworth does not give way to dejection and despair. For time being he decides to give up his lofty theme and makes up his mind to remain satisfied with 'present gifts of humbler industry'—that is shorter and simpler types of poems. It may be noted that during 1798 Wordsworth wrote poems like *Cumberland Beggar*, *The Discharged Soldier* and also the shorter poems to be included in the *Lyrical Ballads* and *Peter Il*.

Poetic inspiration and the search for a suitable theme : But the poet still has his moments of extreme passion and prolonged fits of poetic frenzy. Like a dove driven by the tempest, the poet seems to be goaded on by his poetic frenzy to search the topics of poetry for some exalted theme. Once more, as a person desiring to find if he is fit enough for undertaking an arduous task of writing a great epic, he subjects himself to severe self-analysis, makes a thorough investigation of his mind ; and the result seems to him to be much encouraging. Wordsworth finds that he has all the necessary equipment for achieving such a grand purpose. He does not lack either the very important primary gift, creative or organic sensibility or the power to understand universal truths, which are themselves helping agents and mediaries of the living soul. He is also quite aware of external resources like forms, images and so many other aids of lesser importance. These are also quite essential for a poet to leave behind everlasting fame and glory. Then the poet is in quest of a suitable theme and suitable setting in time and place for his great work. They are, no doubt, available in abundance, but none of them seems to be striking enough for a sure choice. Next, the poet mentions some subjects which were considered by him as suitable for a great epic. First of all his mind turns to 'some old romantic tale by Milton left unsung.' It may be noted here that Milton in his Latin poem *Mansus*, exprerssed a keen desire "to recall in song the things of my native land and Arthur, who carried war even into fairy land." In a manuscript of Milton at Cambridge we also find a list of nearly a hundred possible subjects. But all these were left unsung by Miltion. This also signifies that Wordsworth's first ambition is to emulate Milton whom he considered to be his ideal. Next we find the poet mentioning various other subjects to which his mind turns from time to time. They are : Chivalry and war-like deeds of medieval knights, the noble and brave exploits of great heroes like Mithridates, Odin, Sertorious, Dominique de Gourgues, ("That one Frenchman"), Gustavus a great far-famed

Scottish hero Wollace. It may be noted here that it was poet's reading of Plutarch and Gibbon that attracted him to these noble themes. Sometimes he feels that it would suit him better to invent a story from his own mind, much more closely related to his intense feelings and habitual thinking. But the thin and vague structure of such a story soon fades away from his mind. So the poet is not at all satisfied with any of the above themes. Finally, a passionate desire arises in his soul to write a philosophic poem dealing with some universal truth which gives strength and sustenence to our day-to-day life. This lofty poem should be sublime and highly melodious like the music of Orpheus playing on his lyre. Orpheus was the great musician in Greek mythology. It is said that when Orpheus played on his layer, trees began to dance to the tune. Even Pluto, the god of Hades, was charmed by his music and set free his wife Broserpina. But very soon the poet recoils from such an arduous task. He seeks consolation from the fond hope that advancing years will endow him with maturer power of thinking and clearer insight to compose such a great poem. The poet is hesitant to make a choice. This may be due to his lack of confidence, or to his desire to be very wise and cautious. Thus he becomes a prey to contradictory thoughts and desires. Next he feels that instead of suffering from all these mental conflict it would be far better for him to roam about over the green fields and village pathways deriving only sensuous pleasure from the signs and sounds of nature with an uncensured indifference to all serious thoughts and subjects. The poet also regrets that in this way he finds himself going towards the grave without performing any useful or noble deed, just like an unfaithful manager of an estate who has received a lot from his master but has not rendered any real service to him in return. Here is an echo from one of the famous sonnets of Milton.

Transition to other incidents : Up to this point (Ll. 1 to 269) in this Book Wordsworth has related events which occured long after the autobiographical incidents of his childhood days and of school-time contained in the subsequent part of this poem (Ll. 270-612) ; and the transition to autobiographical incidents and recollections of various experiences of childhood days which contributed to the growth and development of the poet's mind has been done with wonderful ease and naturalness. All his mental conflicts and contradictions and his incapability to undertake the great task of composing an exalted poem on a noble theme sends the poet's mind back to those childhood days which he passed in the harmony of the River Derwent.

Appeal to river Derwent : Thus at this point we find the poet addressing the Derwent with deep emotion and requesting her to tell him if her sweet and soft murmur with all its lovely surroundings which soothed and comforted with all serenity and gentleness, a child who at an advnaced stage of his life gave way to dejection and distracted condition of mind just to shirk away from the noble vocation of his life. Even as a child of five the poet learnt to love

the bright and blue Derwent moving smooth by the side of their terrarce walk as a 'tempting playmate.' As a child of five he came in close contact with nature at Cockermouth, his birthplace, and subsequently at Hawkshead in the valley of Esthwaite where his family shifted when he was a boy of nearly ten. At Cockermouth he bathed and dived in the river Derwent for long spells or at other times ran about swiftly in the sandy fields "leaping through lovely groves of yellow rampart'. Sometimes he used to stand alone under the blue dome amidst the soft lovely surroundings and felt himself to be a Red Indian boy who had run out from his mother's hut in a playful mood. At Hawkshed the poet and his companions had a greater freedom to take part in a variety of games. We come to know from the poet that before he was even ten how he used to catch woodcocks over the high hill sides under the light of the moon and also how he would sometimes catch hold of a bird which was trapped in the snare of some other person. But after the commission of such an unfair deed the poet with his guilty conscience felt that someone with low breathing was dogging his footsteps and would hear "low breathings coming after me and sounds of undistinguished motion ...."

Bird nesting : The next favourite sport of the poet was looking for brid nests. He tells us how they used to move about just like robbers in quest of high places just to rob birds' nests of their eggs. And sometimes he hung alone above the nest of a raven at a high altitude in a very precarious position. At such times he used to be overwhelmed with a mysterious awe by the strange sound of the dry wind and the unearthly appearance of the sky itself and the dark and gloomy clouds above.

Philosophy of Nature and Man : The poet has already told us how from the very childhood, amidst a very lovely and favourable environment, he was nursed and brought up by the various ministries of Nature with the help of her delightful as well as awe-inspiring sights and sounds –

"Fostered alike by beauty and fear".

Next we find a few lines which are partly philosophical and partly psychological. Such thoughtful lines—not only in *The Prelude* but in many other famous poems such as *Tintern Abbey*, *Immortality Ode* and others lucidly reveal the poet's philosohy of Nature and Man, and go a long way to establish his claim to be a philosophical poet.

Here Wordsworth tells us that human beings may be made of dust, but our immortal soul develops like the melody of music harmonising different elements. Nature possesses a mysterious kind of skill and power that can harmonise 'discordant elements' in our nature and thus bring them together in one harmonious combination. Then he expresses his deep sense of thankfulness to nature for all

the means—sometimes pleasant and sometimes aweful—employed by her for the healthy growth and development of his mind and soul. He is all praise for nature for the ultimate peace and serenity of his soul attained by him at a later date due to all the beneficial influences exerted on him by her during the early formative period of his life.

As regards the discipline of pain and fear, Wordsworth might have been influenced to a great extent by the eighteenth century philosopher David Hartley and his theory of association. Hartley and other empiricist philosophers laid great stress on the early background and environment and expressed the view that the character of a man develops during childhood and youth as a direct result of his physical experiences and the feelings of pleasure and pain from such experiences. And we find Wordsworth sharing their view in *The Prelude* to a great extent. But as regards the workings of the subconscious mind he went much further and his ideas seem to be much nearer in the modern psychological theories.

Boating episode : Next we get one of the most celebrated passages from Wordsworth's sensitive pen. It contains the famous boating episode :

> It was an act of stealth
> And troubled pleasure.

And when the stolen boat started moving over the smooth lake there came echoing sounds, rather sounds of wearing, from the mountain sides. After sometimes, to his great dismay, he found a huge and black peak rearing its head from behind the uneven range of hills. To the poet it seemed that it was an awful and a strange living being with a will and power of its own and was following him with regular footsteps with some fixed purpose. With a trembling heart the child was back to the mooring place and went homeward with a pensive mood. But afterwards, for a long period the poet's mind was haunted during the day as well as at night by huge and powerful forms and shapes, whose mode of life is mysterious and beyond the knowledge of human beings.

This boating incident is one of the finest illustrations of how the poet's soul was fostered by Nature's ministry of fear. It may also be noted here that even at this stage Wordsworth had the belief that the different objects of nature were animated by individual spirits with whom he could hold discourses. This is rather Greek-paganism, which ultimately gave way to pantheism that conceives of Nature as the expression of one divine spirit, to a belief in the essential 'oneness of all'.

The poet's Nature-religion : Next we get the poet's comments on the fellowship that existed between him and the different objects of nature even in those early days of his life. The poet once more expresses his gratefulness to the 'Wisdom and Spirit of the

universe' that, from the very earliest days of his childhood, took upon itself the task of shaping an intimate relationship between his human feelings and passions and everlasting things of nature. It was through such communion that Wordsworth was inspired with exalted thoughts and passions and was ultimately able to recognise a loftiness, a grandeur even in the throbing of the human heart. The poet could have such silent intercourse with Nature amidst all the lovely sights and sounds at any time of the day or night and all through the changing seasons of the year. This remarkable passage also offers a very lucid exposition of Wordsworth's Nature-religion.

Skating on ice : The next joyful experience recalled by the poet is the exciting game of skating on the ice in the company of other young friends The ringing sounds of their moving skates would be echoed by the leafless trees and the surrounding hills. From the noise and excitement of even such collective games the poet sometimes tore himself away from his companions to chase alone the fleeting reflection of a star before him or stand and watch the earth and rocks turning round and round when they had stopped their playful whirling movements on the smooth surface of the ice. This phenomenon also aroused a sense of awe in the poet's heart and he felt the presence of some superior power that imparted to them their motion.

Influence of Nature disciplines the mind : After this we find the poet solemnly addressing the Presences of Nature in the sky and on the earth......" and souls of lovely places are telling us that it was surely some noble hope that actuated these 'Presences', these 'Souls of lonely places' to train and discipline his powers and passions and this was done through the ministry of fear and pleasure in the midst of his boyhood games, in the caves, in the hills or in the woods. Nature imparted characteristics of either love or fear to all such objects. This passage also bears testimony to Wordsworth's paganism in his early days.

Emotions recollected in tranquility. Next the poet tells us that the recollection of the lovely natural surroundings in which they played their various games can never go away from his mind. For them it was the most beautiful valley under the sun. Even at this advanced stage of life the poet can recapture the same ecstatic feelings at the sight of the powers of hazel trees with snowy-white bunches of flowers or that of the paper-kite among the clouds tugging at the string like a spirited horse which is pulling hard at its reins and sometimes plunging downwards all of a sudden, overpowered by the stormy wind. The magic-like enchantment of the fishing-rod and line is also unforgettable. We may note here that according to the poet : "Poetry takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility."

It is also beyond the poet to forget those lovely and 'lowly cottages' where they used to pursue their home-amusements or to

play their innocent boyish games like Loo or Whist with shabby and soiled pack of cards. The poet's sensitive mind can still remember how their eager game of cards was disturbed from time to time by the prolonged yelling sound from hills and meadows, sounds that could be compared with the howling of the wolves in groups along the gulf of Bothnia.

Joys of subtler origin. So far the poet has told us about joys whose source was eternal, that is, deriving pleasure from the sensuous beauty of nature. This joy, no doubt, filled his heart with grand and beautiful images of this earth and ultimately made him love them all. We may find here also links with Hartley's associationism that tells us that moral character of a man develops during the early part of life as a direct result of man's physical experiences and the pleasure and pain they cause. Now the poet tells us of joys of subtler origin experienced by him in those early days. During passionate and most active period of his boyhood days those ecstatic sensuous pleasures were so simple and so pure that they seemed to have a more refined or a spiritual source. Often he experienced a calm and serene pleasure which must belong to those early sympathies or inborn instincts and impulses that make the child's new-found existence harmonise with the existing earthly things of life. The poet remembers that even at the age of ten he could be in spiritual communion, though unconsciously, with the Eternal Beauty of the universe and at the same time derive a pure sensuous pleasure from the glorious objects of nature. Thus, the poet often stood for long, gazing at the vast expense of the sea gleaming and glistening under the light of the rising moon and felt like sucking in beauty and pleasure from the minutest part of that glorious sight as a bee sucks in honey from the heart of flowers.

Recollections of a divine origin. Thus, very often even in the midst of those fits of sensuous pleasures and rapturous delight, the poet beheld flashes of momentary visions of divine beauty and the earth seemed to communicate to him things worth remembering--that is it reminded the poet of his divine origin and of the visions of the divine life that he had, prior to his earthly life. All these sights and scenes could not inspire or elevate his soul at that time and were likely to remain hidden in the sub-conscious. The poet expects to recollect them at a later date when his mental powers would be quite mature ; and then they would exalt and inspire his soul. Those scenes remained firmly impressed on his mind with all their essential features and were quite visible to his mind's eye. In this way through the solemn ministry of pleasure and pain, through the force of dimly recollected emotions and feelings those enchanting and sublime scenes became dear to him as a matter of habit and they became closely connected by some invisible bond with his primary affections and impulses , and thus his enjoyment of nature became instinctive. Of course, the time for realising their profound significance was reserved for a distant date.

Appeal to Coleridge to understand and sympathise. At the end Wordsworth once more addresses Coleridge and talks to him rather in an apologetic mood. The poet craves his forgiveness if he has been misled by his mistaken or fond love for those days of childhood or has narrated his story in a dull or feeble manner. He earnestly hopes that recollection of his childhood days may refresh his thoughts and restore the balance of his unsteady mind. The poet once more begs to be pardoned even if all such hopes prove futile, and still he is unable to give up his thoughts about those happy memories of childhood that possess the enchantments of a dream.

Reason for selecting the present theme.

Finally, in his concluding remarks the poet says that he has, at least, succeeded in achieving one important object. His mind has been refreshed and rejuvenated. And if this genial mood persists he will be able to narrate the story of the later years of his life in the subsequent Books of *The Prelude* at an early date. The path lies clear before him as he has chosen a simple theme 'of determined bounds'. The poet has selected this theme for the present as he feels that a work 'Of ampler and more varied arguments' may embarrass and baffle him. That is why he gives up the idea of beginning his great and highly ambitious epic-like work—*The Recluse* for the present. The poet closes by expressing a hope that this humble labour on his part will, definitely, be welcome to his honoured friend.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

1. "Emotion recollected in tranquility. Illustrate this view of poetry from Books I and II of *The Prelude*.
2. What idea have you formed of Wordsworth's poetic gift from Books I and II of *The Prelude*.
3. Write an essay on the stylistic qualities of Books I and II of *The Prelude*.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

THE PRELUDE BOOK I

Text

Complete Paraphrase

Annotations

And

Explanations with Critical Comments

16

The Prelude : Book I

Text

Introduction—Childhood and School-Time

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from you azure sky.
Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come
To none more grateful than to me ; escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner : now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me ? in what vale
Shall be my harbour ? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home ? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest ?
The earth is all before me. With a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
I look about ; and should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again !
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me : it is shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
Long months of peace (if such bold word accord
With any promises of human life),
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect ; whither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course ?

Dear Liberty ! Yet what would it avail
But for a gift that consecrates the joy ?

PRELUDE : BOOK I

COMPLETE PARAPHRASE

Lines : 1 to 30 : This soft and mild breeze is a divine gift to make me happy. It is a holy visitor that caresses my cheek ; and while doing so it seems to be aware to some extent of the joy it brings for me from the blue sky and the green fields. Whatever may be its purpose, this mild breeze cannot be more cheering or refreshing to any body else. I have just escaped from that vast city of London. I had to live and suffer there for a long time as an unhappy resident. I am at liberty now and as free as a bird, to settle down wherever I like. What spot is going to welcome me to make my place of residence ? In what valley shall I find a shelter for me ? Under which grove shall I set up my home ? Which will be the clear stream to soothe me into rest and sleep.

I have the open and wide world lying before me. With a heart full of joy I look around myself–a heart that is not at all afraid of its newly-acquired liberty. I can never miss my way now, even if I choose a sailing cloud to be my guide. Once again I can breathe freely. Lofty ideas and exalted flights of imagination come thick and crowding in my mind. My mind is now relieved of the burden of its unnatural self and the sense of deep discontentment that lay on my soul like a heavy load ; and all these were alien to me and never inherent in my being. I can now look forward to long months of peace, comfort and uninterrupted happiness, without knowing if our future life can, at all, fulfil such great expectations. Which direction shall I take ? Shall I follow a regular road or a pathway, or move on through a pathless field to walk up or down a hill ? Will the course to be followed by me be indicated by some chance object floating on the surface of the river ?

Lines : 31 to 45 : Freedom is, no doubt, dear to me but even this freedom would be of no use if it is not accompanied by a greater gift that renders my joy sacred.

L. 1. Blessing : Divine gift; abundantly pleasing. *L. 3. Half conscious...brings* : The gentle breeze seems to be half aware of the great delight it brings to the poet. As a poet or prophet of nature he has, as usual, imbued nature with a living personality. *L. 7. Vast city* : London. *L. 8. Discontented sojourner* : An unhappy temporary resident. The poet had to live the life of a captive in London. *L. 14. The earth...me* : The great wide world is before him. Unlike a captive he is now free to settle where ever he likes. *L. 19. Trances of mind* : Ecstatic and exalted thoughts. *Mountings of the mind* : lofty flights of imagination. *L. 21. Burthen...self* : To the poet, life in that vast city was like that of a captive. He was never quite at home there. Deep discontentment lay on his soul like a heavy load. *L. 32. gift* : The creative energy to be stimulated by the morning breeze. *Consecrates* : Sanctifies.

For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virture, but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,
And their congenial powers, that, while they join
In breaking up a long-continued frost,
Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
Of active days urged on by flying hours.
Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
Matins and vespers, of harmonious verse !
Thus far, O Friend ! did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of a song,
Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains
That would not be forgotten, and are here
Recorded : to the open fields I told
A prophecy : poetic numbers came
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
A renov ed spirit singled out.
Such hope was mine, for holy services.
My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound ;
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come.
Content and not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
With brisk and eager steps and came, at length,
To a green shady place, were down I sate
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice,
And settling into gentler happiness.

L. 33. The sweet breath of the month : The fragrant breeze blowing from the sky. Here the breeze has been imbued with a personality. *L. 35. A correspondent breeze* : Creative energy in the poet's mind. *L. 37. Redundant energy* : Overwhelming creative force or energy. *L. 38. Vexing*: Disturbing; agitating. *To both* : The external as well as the internal breeze. *L. 39. Congenial powers* : Agreeable and pleasant powers. *L. 40. Long continued frost* : The heavy weight of many a weary day created a sort of listlessness in the poet's mind. Now a thaw is expected. *L. 41. Vernal promises* : After the thaw the spring time of the poet's creative powers will set in *L. 44. Abstruse* : Deep and philosophical. *L. 45. Matins and Vespers* : Morning and evening prayers ; here the words stand for noble and sublime poetry. *L. 46. O Friend* : Colerige to whom this poem is addressed *L. 48. Pour forth...strains* : Expressed the deepest feelings for my soul in harmonious verse. *That day* : The day of his journey from Bristol to Racedown. *L. 50-51. I told a prophecy* : I predicted like a prophet. *Ll. 51-52. To cloth in priestly robe* : Like a

It seemed to me that, when the sweet heavenly breeze was gently moving over my body, there arose within me a similar breeze of poetic inspiration. In the beginning it moved softly to inspire me with poetic zeal; but it has now grown into a tempest, having so much of superfluous energy that it is causing trouble to its own source. I am thankful to both of these, the external and the internal breeze and to their pleasant powers. Both of them have combined to bring about a thaw in the long-continued frost (in the external world as in poet's mind). Now they bring with them a bright promise to herald spring and also great hope for days of creative activity. The swiftly flying time will urge him on to poetic creations. It will really be a period of pleasant leisure but not without deep philosophical meditations and not without the high and regular service of writing poetry of a lofty and sublime order—poems of prayer that is in tune with hours of the morning and evening.

Lines : 45-58 : O my friend (Coleridge) ! I have, so far, not been in the habit of turning an immediate joy into a subject for writing a poem. I have only expressed the deepest feelings of the heart in harmonious verses that could never be forgotten, and so are recorded here. Addressing the open fields, I predicted like a prophet. Verses came to me naturally and effortlessly, as if to enrobe with a priestly or spiritual garb a specially chosen and revitalised spirit which was to compose poetry of deep religious or spiritual exaltation. I was cheered up by my own voice and, more than that, by the internal echo of the imperfect sound of my voice. I listened to both these voices (my voice and the mind's echo to this voice) and drew from both an optimistic confidence about the shape of things to come.

Lines 59-100 : I was quite satisfied and wanted to give a breathing space to my creative urge for writing poetry for a while. I moved on with brisk and eager steps. At length I found a green shady place where I sat down under a tree and willingly relaxing my thoughts for some time settled into a gentle mood of calm and happiness.

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priest's solemn prayer to create poetry of great spiritual exaltation. *L. 53. Renovated* : Refreshed ; revitalised. *Single out* : specially chosen for such creative activities. *L. 60. A respite to the passion* : A pause or a rest to his intense creative urge. *L. 63. Slackening my thoughts by choice* : Slowing down or giving relaxation to the flights of my imagination voluntarily.

'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day,
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours, declined towards the west; a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
A perfect stillness Many were the thoughts
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
Of a known Vale, whither my feet should turn,
Nor rest till they had reached the very door
Of the one cottage which methought I saw
No picture of mere memory ever looked
So fair; and while upon the fancied scene
I gazed with growing love, a higher power
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused.
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup
Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once
To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound.
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
Had almost touched the horizon : casting then
A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralized:
Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive,
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.
It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked
Aeolian visitations ; but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence ! 'Be it so ;
Why think of anything but present good ?'

L. 72. A known vale : Racedown—Wordsworth and Dorothy settled down here in 1795. *L. 77-78. A higher power than fancy* : Imagination or the poetic faculty for excellence *L. 83. Acorn* : Fruit of the oakt ree. *L. 89. Distance ruralise* : Seemed to have acquired a rural character due to the distance. *L. 96. Aeolian visitation* : Aeolus is the Greek god of winds. Aeolean harp is a stringed instrument that produces musical sounds when exposes to wind. Here the wind of inspirations seems to play upon his soul as on a harp. *L 97. The banded host of harmony* : Harmonious thoughts aroused in his soul due to Aeolean visitations. *L. 98. Dispersed in straggling sounds* : The harmonious thoughts and ideas lay scattered without creating any desriable effect.

It was a calm and serene day of autumn. For the last two hours the sun had been going down towards the west and was giving out the desired degree of warmth. It was a day with silvery clouds and the grass was gleaming under the light of the sun. There was absolute calm and silence in the grove that gave shelter to others and was also sheltered by the tall trees around. So many thoughts were entertained by me for the choice of a place but they were ultimately discarded. Finally, a known valley (Racedown) was selected and I began to move on. I decided not to stop or take rest till I reached the very door of a cottage which I seemed to me have been seen before. This place with the cottage seemed to me more beautiful than any other place that I could remember. While I gazed upon that scene of my imagination with increasing love, some divine or nobler power than fancy spoke with assurance to my soul that I would begin some exalted work of undying fame at that place and perhaps would also be able to accomplish that great task there. Thus, for a long time I was absorbed in my thoughts without losing sight of the subjects of my musings, except when an acorn, freed from its cup, fell down rustling through the dry leaves amid the grove of majestic oak trees here and there or all of a sudden dropped to the bare ground startling me out of my deep thought. I did not rise from the soft grassy place where I settled down till the sun had almost touched the horizon. Then I threw a backward glance upon the rising city smoke curling up like a column of cloud. It seemed to have acquired a rural charm because of the distance. I felt as enthusiatic as one who runs away from duty or as one who runs away from danger. But I was also as determined as a pilgrim to take the road to the valley chosen by me, although I had very little equipment at that time except what I had got with me, as it were by chance. It was a lovely evening and my soul once more measured its own power and ability; it was not without thoughts or inspiration that seemed to play upon my soul as wind on the Aeolian harp. But soon it was clear that my soul had been deceived as it failed to respond to the wind of inspiration to produce a harmonious pattern; and so the notes grew weaker and fainter and finally died away. And then there was absolute silence. Let it be so. Why should the poet think of any thing except immediate benefit.

So, like a come-bound labourer I pursued
My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
Mild influence ; nor left in me one wish
Again to bend the Sabbath of that time
To a servile yoke. What need of many words ?
A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.
I spare to tell of what ensued, that life
In common things—the endless store of things.
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day
Found all about me in one neighbourhood—
The self-congratulation, and from morn
To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene.
But speedily an earnest longing rose
To brace myself to some determined aim,
Reading or thinking; either to lay up
New stores, or rescue from decay the old
By timely interference : and therewith
Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
I might endue some airy phantasies
That had been floating loose about for years,
And to such beings temperately deal forth
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
That hope hath been discouraged ; welcome light
Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear
And mocks me with a sky that ripens not
Into a steady morning : if my mind,
Remembering the bold promise of the past.
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
Vain is her wish where'er she turns she finds
Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up
Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts
Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend !

Ll. 104-105 To bend...yoke : To sacrifice the joys of rest and leisure of that time to undertake some hard task, *i.e.*, making poems. *L. 107. Hermitage :* Cottage at Racedown. *L. 115. Brace... aim :* To prepare myself for some fixed project. *L. 118. Timely interference :* Action or attention at the opportune moment. *L. 120. Endue ...phantasies :* Give expression to some fanciful notions and thoughts. *Ll. 122-123. To such...many feelings* : To ascribe to such fancies all the feelings troubling his mind in a softer manner. *L. 124-125. Welcome...east :* Poetic inspriation comes to him cheering him up from the east, the source of poetic Muse. *Ll. 126-27. A sky...morning :* But the inspiration and energy fades away into nothingness. *Ll. 133-34 For present gifts of humble industry :* Realising his inability to tackle some noble theme—'by Milton left unsung the poet likes to remain satisfied for a while with a humbler type of work—that is simpler

Lines : 101-131 : So, like a labourer setting out for home after the day's toil, I moved on beneath the setting sun that shed a soft and gentle light on all objects. I had no desire at all to sacrifice the joys of rest and pleasure of that time to undertake some hard task and work like a slave. There is no need of using many words to describe my condition. I moved on leisurely and after three days of pleasant journey I reached my chosen place of shelter. I refrain from telling about the kind of life I began to live. I was quite interested in common things and the endless store of things, which were rare or seemed to be rare. I found them all around me in that locality. I congratulated myself for being able to live a life in that way. From morning to night my heart was full of joy and tranquility without any break. But very soon I felt a keen desire to prepare myself for some fixed project or plan such as reading or thinking. I should either gather a new store of knowledge or rescue my old stores of knowledge from being forgotten by taking timely action. With that, still loftier hopes arose in my heart. I thought that I might give poetic or visible expression to some vague fancies and longings, that were drifting about aimlessly in my mind for many years and also hoped that I might, in a sober manner, ascribe to such fancies and notions all the feelings which had been disturbing my mind. Those hopes failed to get any encouragement. Poetic inspiration comes to me from the east (the source of poetic Muse) with the rising of the sun, but it fades inso nothingness and seems to make fun of me as the light of hope does not brighten up at all. Remembering the bold promises of the past if I wish to tackle some exalted theme with gladness, I meet with absolute failure. In whichever direction my mind turns it faces fresh and fresh obstacles from day to day.

Lines. 132-145. Now I shall be satisfied if I give up my lofty hopes for the present to engage myself with some modest type of work (that is simpler and shorter type of poems). But my dear friend.

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poems like those in the lyrical Ballads" and other shorter poems composed during the early months of 1798.

The Poet, gentle creature as he is.
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times ;
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts : his mind, best pleased
While she as duteous as the mother dove
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves ;
With me is now such passion, to be blamed
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.
When, as becomes a man who would prepare
For such an arduous work, I through myself
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often cheering ; for I neither seem
To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,
Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort
Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,
Subordinate helpers of the living mind :
Nor am I naked of external things,
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil
And needful to build up a Poet's praise.
Time, Place and manners do I seek, and these
Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such
As may be singled out with steady choice ;
No little band of yet remembered names
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
To summon back from lonesome banishment,
And make them dwellers in the hearts of men
Now living, or to live in future years.
Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
Will settle on some British theme, some old
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung ;

Ll. 140-41. As the mother dove sits brooding : The poet's mind lost in deep meditation just like the mother-dove sitting dutifully on her eggs. Here is another echo from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. *L. 143. Goadings on* : Urges : promptings from within. *L. 145. Passion* : Indomitable urge. *L. 148. Rigorous inquisition* : Thorough investigation. *L. 150. Vital soul* : Creative sensibility, *L. 151, General truths* : Universal or philosophic truths. *Ll. 154, Nor...things* : The poet was also quite aware of the importance of forms, images etc, for creative work. *L. 156. Regard* : importance, significance *L. 167-68. Mistaking.. regular sea* : Regarding a short-lived onrush of poetic inspiration as a steady source of profound creative activities; here spring-tide swellings mean trivial subjects without any depth.

Friend, the poet may be a passion when he is unable to control himself and has also fits of poetic frenzy when he is really neither ill nor well. At such times there is nothing to agitate him except his own uncontrolled passions. The poet's mind is mightily pleased as long as it is lost in deep meditation upon some chosen subject, just like the mother bird sitting dutifully on its eggs. But the poet cannot stick to that end for long. He is driven by some strong urge from within to search the groves (of poetry) just as the mother-dove is, some-times, forced to fly in quest of groves as if it were in some trouble. At present I am under the sway of such a great emotional stress. There is nothing to find fault with this. But I am blaming it only because this frenzy is lasting rather too long.

Lines : 146-165 : When as its proper for a man who desires to prepare himself for such a difficult task (of writing a great epic), I subject myself to a severe self-analysis, I find the result to be much encouraging. In fact I do not seem to be lacking either in the very important primary gift, creative or organic sensibility, or the power to understand universal truths, which are themselves just helping agents and mediaries to the living soul to create. I am also quite aware of external resources like forms, images and so many other aids of lesser importance; and these I had to acquire with hard intellectual labour as they are very much necessary to bring name and fame to the poet. I am in quest of a suitable setting in time and place and an appropriate style and they are available in abundance; but none of them seems to be striking enough for a firm and sure choice. There are great many names which I remember and which I can, quite confidently, call back to my mind from oblivion and make them live again in the hearts of men, now living or who will be living in the years to come.

Lines : 166-185 : Sometimes my lofty power of ambition regarding the choice of a proper theme leads me to mistake a short-lived onrush of poetic inspiration as a steady source of profound, creative activity; and then I think of a subject related to Britain. Milton might have dreamt of writing an epic on such a romantic theme, but he could not accomplish it.

More often turning to some gentle place
Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe
To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,
Amid reposing knights by a river side
Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
Of dire enchantments faced and overcome
By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry
That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife ;
Whence inspiration for a song that winds
Through ever-changing scenes of votive quest
Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
To patient courage and unblemished truth,
To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves
Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
Odin, the Father of a race by whom
Perished the Roman Empire : how the friends
And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles,
And left their usages, their arts and laws,
To disappear by a slow gradual death,
To dwindle and to perish one by one.
Starved in those narrow bounds : but not the soul
Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
Survived, and, when the European came
With skill and power that might not be withstood,
Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold
And wasted down by glorious death that race
Of natural heroes ; or I would record,

Ll. 178-9. As if shield bore : It seemed even the spears and swords were aware of the heroic traditions from the dràwings and emblems engraved on the shield. *L. 181. Votive quest :* A solem and determined search for opportunities to fulfil a vow as the knights of Middle Ages were wont to undertake. *L. 184. Zeal unquenchable :* Indomitable fervour. *L. 185. And Christian... loves :* Christian humility leading a sacred quality to true love. *L. 187. Mitheridates :* King of Pontus who bravely challenged and fought the Romans from 88 B. C. to 63. B. C. In fact he put an end to his life after his defeat. But there was a legend that, instead of dying he went North and spending several years in hiding. reappeared as Odin, the founder of a race, the Goths, that brought about the destruction of the Roman empire. *L. 191. Sertorius :* He was a brilliant General of the later period of the Roman Republic defying the power of Sulla for over eight years. He was assassinated in 72. B. C. He never flew out of Spain. This is the

Very often my mind contemplates on some gentle theme of chivalry and I think of composing pastoral poems to please the shepherds; or sometimes I feel like sitting down, with a harp in my hand by the side of a river or a fountain where knights are relaxing and listen to solemn medieval tales of dreadful magic spells and enchantments which the brave knights faced and overcame. There I may also listen to tales of brave martial deeds, where spears and swords clashed with swords; and the weapons came up aganist one another so boldy that it seemed that they were quite aware of the accounts of glory and heroic tradition of knights engraved on the shield, and this made their struggle great and glorious. Such tales of chivalry inspired me to write a poem narrating the solemn and determined quest of opportunities by warriors of various places to right a wrong and also to pay a tribute, in a lyrical language, to the people of persevering courage, of pure truth, of firm loyalties, of never ending enthusiasm to serve a right cause and of Christian humility lending a sacred touch to faithful love.

Lines : 186-220 : Sometimes, stirred to think of more serious subjects I would like to narrate the story of Mithridates (Roman general) who moved towards the north after his defeat and after spending a number of years in hiding reappeared as Odin and became the founder of a race which ultimately brought about the destruction of the Roman Empire. Or I would prefer to describe how the friends and followers of Sertorios, the famous Roman general, fled from Spain, found shelter in the Fortunate Islands (the canaries in the Atlantic) and how their customs, arts and their laws, given up by them in course of time, wasted away slowly and ultimately died and disappeared due to prolonged disuse in these small islands. But the spirit of liberty never died out; it remained alive in them for fifteen hundred years. When the Europeans came there with their irresistible skill and power, that spirit of freedom maintained its hold on this race of natural heroes like some deadly disease and for this they died glorious deaths.

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poet's own invention. During the course of his travels he reached certain islands in the Atlantic supposing them to be Homer's Fortunate Islands.

How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled-man,
Unnamed among the chronicles of kings,
Sufferred in silence for Truth's sake ; or tell
How that one Frenchman, through continued force
Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles,
Went single in his ministry across
The Ocean ; not to comfort the oppressed,
But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about
Withering the Oppressor : how Gustavus sought
Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines :
How Wallace fought for Scotland ; left the name
Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower.
All over his dear Country ; left the deeds
Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,
To people the steep rocks and river banks,
Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
Of independence and stern liberty.
Sometimes it suits me better to invent
A tale from my own heart, more near akin
To my own passions and habitual thoughts ;
Some variegated story, in the main
Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts
Before the very sun that brightens it
Mist into air dissolving ! Then a wish,
My last and favourite aspiration, mounts
With yearning towards some philosophic song
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life ;
With meditations passionate from deep
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre ;

L. 206. That one Frenchman : Dominique de gourgues who left for Florida in 1567. Here the reached settlers were massacared by the Spaniards in 1565. *L. 208. Indian Isles :* Islands lying near the mainland of America. *L. 209. Ministry :* Noble or holy duty. *L. 212. Gustavus* : grand father of Gustavus Adolphus who freed Sweden from the clutches of the Danes in the 16th century. *L. 213. Help... mines :* Gustavus lived in disguise as a peasant in the mining district of Dalecarlia to evade capture. *L. 214. Wallace* : Sir William Wallace fought for Scotland against Edward I, but was defeated in 1298. He was captured and executed after 7 years. *L. 219. Sanctuaries :* Holy places or a place where one can be safe from pursuers. *L. 224. Variegated* : Consisting of diverse elements. *L. 225. The unsubstantial structure melts :* The flimsy framework of the story dissolves into air. *L. 229. Philosophic song :* lofty poem dealing with some great truth. *L. 232-3. Immortal verse...lyre* : Lofty poem of undying fame as grand and sublime as the music of Orpheus playing on his lyre. *Orpheus*—a celebrated musician in ancient Greek mythology.

Or I would relate, how, in times when despotic kings ruled, some heroic soul, never mentioned in the historical records of by-gone kings and monarchs, embraced troubles and sufferings silently fort he sake of truth. Or I have a desire to narrate how that Frenchman, Dominique de Gourgues as a result of medidating long and deep on the cruel and beastly deeds of those (Spaniards) who were the first to conquer the Indian Isles, voyaged alone across the sea to carry out his solemn task. His purpose was not simply to comfort the victim of persecution but to wander about like a hot and thirsty wind to bring death and destruction to the oppressors. Or I would prefer to relate how Gustavus I (King of Sweden) aspiring to free his country from Danish rule sought help to live in disguise in the mining district of Dalecarla ; or how Wallace fought for the liberty of Scotland and left his name and fame pervading his country just like wild flowers growing everywhere and how his brave deeds like invisible spirits haunted every part of the country with its towering hills, river banks, its safe retreats, provided by nature herself to inspire the inhabitants with an uncompromising urge for freedom.

Lines 221 : 269 : Sometimes I feel that it would suit me better to invent a story from my own mind, much more closely related to my intense feelings and habitual thinking. The story may be consisting of diverse elements, but it must have an exalted tone. But the thin and vague structure of such a story seems to melt away due to great intensity of my poetic passion just as mist fades away touched by the rays of the rising sun. Then I feel a passionate desire arising in my soul with growing intensity to compose a lofty poem dealing with some great truth which gives strength and sustenance to our day-to-day life. Such a lofty posm of undying fame rises from the very depth of the human soul after deep meditations and is as sublime as the music of Orpheus playing on his lyre (after his return from the under world).

But from this awful burthen I full soon
Take refuge and beguile myself with trust.
That mellower years will bring a riper mind
And clearer insight. Thus my days are past
In contradiction ; with no skill to part
Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,
From paramount impulse not to be withstood,
A timorous capacity, from prudence,
From circumspection, infinite delay.
Humility and modest awe, themselves
Betray me, serving often for a cloak
To a more subtle selfishness ; that now
Locks every function up in blank reserve,
Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
That with intrusive restlessness beats off
Simplicity and self-presented truth.
Ah ! better far than this, to stray about
Voluptuously through fields and rural walks
And ask no record of the hours, resigned
To vacant musing, unreproved neglect
Of all things and deliberate holiday.
Far better never to have heard the name
Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
Turns recreant to her task ; takes heart again,
Then feels immediately some hollow thought
Hang like an interdict upon her hopes.
This is my lot ; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting, so much wanting in myself
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
In listlessness from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably travelling towards the grave
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back.

L. 234. Awful burthen : Heavy and arduous task of composing a philosophic poem. *L. 236. Mellower...mind* : Advancing years will endow the poet with a maturer power of thinking. *L. 240. Paramount impulse :* Irresistible poetic urge. *L. 242. Circumspection :* Watchfulness. *L. 246. Locks...reserve :* Prevents me from exercising my poetic talents. *Ll. 250-251. Stray about volunptuously :* To roam about in quest or sensuous delights. *L. 254. Unreproved neglect* : Blameless indifference. *L. 258. Turns recreant :* Becomes a coward or a traitor. *L. 260. Hang like an interdict :* Acts as a deterrent ; Wakes a prohibition. *L. 270. The fairest of all rivers :* Derwent.

But very soon I recoil from undertaking such an arduous task and console myself with a fond hope that my advancing years will endow me with a maturer power of thinking and a deeper wisdom to compose such a great poem. In this way I pass the days with contradictory thoughts and am unable to distinguish desires from irresistible poetic urge without any definite plan for creation. I am hesitant to make a choice ; and this hesitation may be due to my lack of confidence or to my desire to be very wise and cautious to run any risk ; and all these bring about an endless delay. I lack in my power to discern and distinguish. I have also been misled by my own humility and fear springing from modesty, and these often serve the purpose for some sort of a cover, for a subtle kind of selfishness that has at one time wholly prevented me from exercising my poetic talents, and at some other time deceives me by intruding upon me and putting off the simplicity of style and the truth which offers itself for clear expression. Instead of suffering from these mental conflicts it would be far better for me to roam about over the fields and village pathways deriving only sensuous enjoyment from the beauty of nature, without caring for the passage of time, abandoning myself to purposeless thinking, to an uncensured indifference to all serious subjects and to a deliberate and purposeful enjoyment of leisure. I feel it would be far better for me to forget the words signifying enthusiasm rightful aspiration than to live with a confused and distracted mind that every hour turns cowardly away from its task, a mind that at one moment takes courage and the very next moment feels dejected due to some vain thought acting as a deterrant to all long cherished aspirations. So I am passing my days in this unhappy condition, as either I always find some drawback in the theme selected by me, or I feel myself so much lacking in perfection to deal with my chosen theme that I shirk away from my task, give way to dejection, lethargy and indolence, seeking an escape from the futile distractions of my mind. Thus I find myself graviating towards the grave without performing any useful deed, just like an unfaithful manager of an estate who has received a lot from his master but has not rendered any real services to him in return.

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dream ? For this, didst thou ,
O Derwent ! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.
When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
That yet survive, a shattered monument
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed
Along the margin of our terrace walk ;
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
Made one long bathing of a summer's day ;
Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
Of yellow ragwort ; or when rock and hill,
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone.
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness; to sport
A naked savage, in the thunder shower.
    Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear :
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which ere long
We were transplanted—there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain-slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy

L. 277 composed my thoughts : Soothed and comforted the child's mind. *L. 283. Those towers :* Towers of the Cockermouth. *L. 294. Ragwort :* A yellow flowered and ragged-leaved plant. *L. 295. Skiddaw :* A mountain. *L. 298. Indian :* Here it means Red Indian. *L. 299. Wantonness :* Playfulness. *L. 301 Fair : seed-time :* The period of his early growth. *L. 302 Fostered :* Nursed and brought up. *L. 303. Birth-place :* Cockermouth. *L. 304. That beloved*

Lines : 270-300 : Was it for this distracted condition of my mind that the Derwent, fairest of all rivers, gladly mingled its soft bubbling sound with my nurse's song and from the groves of alder trees growing on its bank, its rocky water-fall, and from its fords and shallow places sent a soothing voice to blend with my childhood dreams ? O Derwent, was it for this that you, mean winding through grassy meadows on which I used to cast long and steady look as a very young child, produced, sweet musical sounds for long without any break to soothe and comfort me with a serenity and gentleness greater than that enjoyed by an infant, and to give me, even when living in human abodes full of fever and fret of life, an experience rather in advance, a vague anticipatory feeling of the calm and serenity which nature engenders among the hills and groves. After leaving the mountains and after receiving on its smooth surface the shadow of the towers of Cockermouth castle that still services as a dilapidated memorial of feudal power and greatness, the bright and blue river (the Derwent) flowed on along the side of our terrace walk. The river was like a tempting playfellow to us and we loved it very dearly. Oh, as a child of five years very often I would spend the whole day of a summer bathing on a channel branching off from this river and driving a water mill. I used to take a dive into the river and bask in the sun in turns through-out a summer's day. Or at some other time I would run about swiftly in the sandy fields leaping through groves of yellow ragort abounding in flowers. Or when the rock and hill, the forests and the towering top of Skiddaw (a mountain) at a distance turned rich brown, bathed in the brilliant rays of the sun, I would stand alone beneath the sky. At such times I felt as if I had been born in the land of Red Indians and just in a playful mood had run out of my mother's hut to play like a wild naked boy in the thunder shower.

Lines : 301-325 : My soul had an ample and a very favourable environment for the period of its early growth, and in such an atmosphere I was nursed and brought up by emotions aroused by both beauty and awe. I was much liked at Cockermouth, my birthplace and was also equally favoured in the beloved valley of Esthwaite to which we were shifted soon afterwards. There we were given greater freedom to take part in a variety of games. Before I became a boy of ten years it was a source of great delight to me to wander.

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vale : Esthwaite. Wordsworth spent his school days at Hawkshed at the north-west end of this vale. *L. 310. Springs* : Snares for catching small birds.

With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks ran
Among the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation :—moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'eropwered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey ; and when the dead was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge ; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh ! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Souldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear ! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds !

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange, that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself ! Praise to the end !
Thanks to the means which Nature designed to employ ;

L. 313. Scudding : Running quickly. *L. 326. Cultured vale :* Cultivated valley. *Ll. 329-30. Yet...ignoble ·* Their object of stealing bird's nest was, no doubt, mean, but the means employed by them were full of adventure and spiritual excitement. So, in the end they never felt that they had done anything mean or ignoble. *L. 334. Amain :* with full force. *L. 342. Inscrutable workmanship :*

With a lot of bird-snares hanging from my shoulder, over the high hill sides, where the woodcocks would run over the green grassy soil. This was the time when the frost and the chilly wind had sharply bitten at the last autumnal crocus growing over those high slopes. Right upto midnight I used to run quickly from one trap to another working anxiously and assiduously, and all the while the light of the moon and the stars shone over my head. I used to be absolutely along and seemed to be disturbing the peace that reigned over the place. In the course of such nocturnal wanderings a strong desire sometimes got the upperhand over my reasoning power and I used to catch hold of a bird which was trapped in a snare set by some other person. After the commission of such an unfair deed I felt that some one with suppressed breath was following me and I also heard sounds of movement almost inaudible and also these of footsteps as quite and silent as the grassy plot on which they moved.

Lines : 326-339 : Our activities went on unabated when spring had brought warmth to the cultivated valley, and then we moved about just like robbers in quest of high places where the mother birds were expected to build their nests. Our object in committing such a deed was, no doubt, mean and ignoble, but in the end we did not have such feelings. Oh ! When I was hanging above the nest of a raven without sufficient support, simply holding on to knots of grass and narrow cracks in the slippery rock, I felt as if the strong wind blowing with great force against the naked rock was supporting me to hold on. At such hours while I hung alone on the dangerous hill-side, the loud dry wind spoke to me in a mysterious voice ; the sky also had a strange, unearthly appearance and the very clouds seemed to have some sort of mysrety in their movements.

Lines : 340-356 : We human beings are, no doubt, made of dust but still our immotal soul develops like melody of music harmonising different notes. Nature possesses a mysterious and unknown kind of skill that can harmonise disagreeable and opposite elements and thus bring them together in one harmonious combination. It is really very strange that all the terrors, pains, early troubles, regrets annoyances and sense of weariness, all mixed up in my mind, should, have played such a necessary part to bring about a calm and peaceful existence for me when I act and feel nobly in a manner worthy of myself. I am all praise for this ultimate peace and serenity of my soul and also grateful to nature for all the means employed by her to foster my soul.

Mysterious kind of skill. *Ll. 338-39. The sky...earth :* The sky had a mysterious and unearthly appearance. *Ll. 342-43 Reconciles discordant elements* : Harmonises different and disagreeable parts and powers of man and nature. *L. 346. Lassitudes* : moods of laziness. *L. 350. The end :* "The calm existence that is mine".

Whether her fearless visitings. or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.
One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on ;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary ; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace ; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan ;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instict
Upreared its head. I struk and struck again.
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,

L. 355. Interventations : Admonitions. *Ministry* : Training discipline *L. 356. Palpable :* Tangible ; easily felt *L. 366. They.........track*: Those shining circles of water dissolved giving way to a single track of bright light. *L. 373. Elfin pinnance :* A boat like the one used by the fairies. *Lustily* : Vigorously *L. 379. As if.........instinct :* As if endowed with a will and a power of its own.

Sometimes her discipline was mild and gentle causing no fear and at some other time her admonitions caused some slight and gentle fear; but it was as slight and mild as the fear which is caused by the harmless light that seems to pass through clouds after opening or parting them. On some cccasions Nature's training and discipline was much more severe to suit her purpose best by creating a more tangible effect on the poet's mind.

Lines : 357-400 : Led by the promptings of Nature, one summer evening I found a little boat tied to a willow tree within a rocky cave where it was usually tied. I immediately untied the chain and after getting into the boat pushed it away from the share. It was an act of theft and my pleasure was mixed with anxiety. When the boat moved on there came echoing sounds (of warning) from the mountain sides. It left behind it, on either side, small circles of water gleaming idly under the light of the moon till all of them were mixed up and dissolved giving way to one single track of glittering light. But now, like a person, who rows with a sense of pride in his skill to reach straight to a selected spot without any deviation, I fixed up my gaze on the peak of an uneven mountain range which formed the farthest boundary on the distant horizon. Above me there was nothing except the grey sky and the stars. My lovely boat seemed to have a fairy like appearance. I dipped the oars vigourously into the silent lake, and as I rose up after the stroke to propel it, my boat moved ahead like a swan skimming on the surface of the lake. Just at this moment from behind that uneven range of the high hill which had so far seemed to me to be the boundary of distant horizon, a huge and black peak reared its head, as if it were a living being endowed with a will and a power of its own. I continued to row on and on over the calm lake, but slowly growing larger in stature the awful peak with its towering height seemed to stand between me and the stars. It still seemed to me that the awful shape was a living creature following me with regular steps with some fixed purpose of its own. With the oars trembling in my hand I turned my couurse and moved.

And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree ;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being ; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields ;
But huge and mighty forms that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.
Wisdom and Spirit of the universe !
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and Nature, purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods
At noon, and, mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine:
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the water, all the summer long.

L. 391. Spectacle : Striking or wonderful sight. *L. 395. Blank desertion* Complete vacum in his mind. *L. 402. Eternity of thought :* Everlasting principle of thought. *L. 407 Intertwine :* Shaped : formed the texture of. *L. 415. Vouchsafed to me :* Bestowed on me. *L. 422 Intercourse :* Communion (companionship).

On silently over the calm surface of the lake to be back to the a shelter of the willow tree. I left the boat at the place where it was harboured and went homeward in a pensive and serious mood through the grassy fields. But, for many days after I had seen that strange striking sight my mind was haunted by a vague and strange feeling that in nature there were mysterious forms of life beyond the knowledge of man. Deep darkness hung over my mind wiping out almost all previous knowledge; it may be called mere solitude or a complete vacuum in my mind. I was devoid of my impression of all previously known objects and pleasing sights like three of trees, of sea or sky, or of the colours of green fields. Only huge powerful forms and shapes whose mode of life is absolutely different from that of man, haunted my mind during the day and troubled me in my dreams at night.

Lines : 401-424 : O Wisdom and spirit of the universe, you are as eternal as human thought; you transmit life and everlasting movement to all objects and forms. It was not in vain that. from my earliest days of infancy, by day as well as by star-lit night, you took upon yourself the task of shaping an intimate relationship between the human passions in my soul and high and everlasting things of nature—and not the temporary and vulgar creations of man. Thus, by this mode of interlinking, you refined elements of my feeling and of thought and through proper control and training lent a sacred quality to both pain and fear and finally led me to recognise a grandeur, a loftiness in the beatings of the human heart. Further, you never lacked in generosity in bestowing on me this companionship with the enduring objects of nature. Hence I could commune with nature in the days of November when clouds moving down the valley deepend the silence and loneliness of a scene, in the woods at noon as well as during the calm and quiet period of summer nights, when I used to go homewards alone beneath the dark hill along the bank of the quivering lake. I could also enjoy such companionship in the open fields, both by day and by night, and all through summer season by the side of lakes and rivers.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me
It was a time of rapture ! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle ; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron ; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the grassy plain and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short ; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round !
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

L. 433. All shod with steel : Iron skates fitted to our feet. *L. 435. Confederate* : Collective ; joining together. *L. 437. Pack* : Pack of hounds. *L. 440. Rang aloud* : Reverberated ; sent echoes. *L. 449. Tumultuous* : Noisy excited. *L. 450. Reflex of a star* : Reflection of a star. *L. 460. Diurnal round* : Daily rotation on the axis.

Lines : 425-463 : And during the season of frost and snow, when after the sun-set, the cottage fires shining brightly through the gloom of the twilight were visible for miles around, I did not care to pay any heed to their calls for returning home. It was really a very happy time for all of us, but for me it was a time for ecstatic delight. The village clock struck clearly and loudly and announced the hour of six. I moved round and round feeling greatly proud and joyful like a horse which is not at all tired and does not care to go back to its home in the least. With iron skates fitted to our feet we played games collectively on the polished ice and moved about producing hissing sounds. We wanted to imitate all joyful woodland sports and the game of the hunters who accompanied by their barking pack of hounds, blow their horn echoing through the woods to enjoy the thrill of chasing hares. Thus we skated and moved very fast through the cold and darkness—all of us shouting together. The steep mountains resounded, struck by the ringing sounds of our skating. The leafless trees and the ice-capped hills made a soft ringing and metalic sound, while the far-distant hills sent a distinct type of sad sound to mingle with all this great and excited noise-and this could not remain unnoticed by us. The stars in the eastern sky were shining clearly at this time and the orange colour of the evening sky faded away without any trace. Many a time I used to get away from all such tumult to move into a silent bay, or I would sometimes leave the noisy crowd, look sidways playfully and chase the reflection of a star in the ice—the reflection that seemed to flee before me, but still went on shining on the smooth and mirror like surface of the plain. Very often, when we had been whirling on the smooth plain and moving in the direction in which the wind was blowing, the dark hill sides on either side came through the darkness with a quick movement. At such times, after going round and round in circles for long I would shift my weight upon my heels and stop my whirling movements all of a sudden. But even when I had stopped my movements, the lonely rocks still seemed to be turning round and for this the earth itself seemed to be revolving on its axis with distinct motion to complete its daily rotation. These rocks seemed to lie spread out behind me in a solemn procession ; and while I stood and watched, their movements grew slower and slower till every thing became absolutely quiet and peaceful like a profound sleep without dreams.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth ! Ye Visions of the hills !
And Souls of lonely places ! Can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye, through many a year
Hanuting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire ; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea ?
Not uselessly employed,
Might I pursue this theme through every change
Of exercise and play, to which the year
Did summon us in his delightful round.
We were a noisy crew ; the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours ;
Nor saw a band in happiness and joy
Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
I could record with no reluctant voice
The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung ; the rod and line,
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
And unreproved enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.
—Unfading recollections ! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
From some hill-top on sunny afternoons,
The paper kite high among fleecy clouds
Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser ;
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.
Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt.
A ministration of your own was yours ;
Can I forget you, being as you were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields

L. 464. presence of nature : Poet believes that every object of nature has soul of its own ; this is paganism. *Ll. 467-68. Employed such ministry* : Rendered such service and training. *L. 487. Unreproved enchantment* : Blameless delight. *L. 487. Impetuous courser* : Rash and powerful horse.

Lines : 464-475. O spirits of Nature in the sky and on the earth ! O vision of the hills ! And ye souls of solitary places ! It was surely some noble hope-never a low and vulgar one—that actuated you to such ways and training and discipline for my mind, when, for so many years, you possessed my mind of haunted me in this way in the midst of my boyish games in the caves, in the woods and on trees imparting characteristics of either love or fear to all such objects of nature. In this way you made entire nature heave with triumph and delight, with hope and fear just like the vast sea.

Lines : 476-498 : I would think myself engaged in a useful task if I continued to pursue this theme (constant communion with nature) through all the different kinds of exercise and sport to which the years with its changing and delightful seasons invited us.

We were a noisy group of boys. Ours was the most beautiful valley under the sun, and never did the sun in the sky shine upon a group of boys richer in happiness and joy than we were ; and no other group was so much worthy of the ground on which they walked as we were. With great pleasure I could describe the woods of autumn and their powers of hazel tree with snowy-white bunches of flowers hanging overhead and the fishing rod and line which is a true sign and symbol of the foolishness of human hopes and could also narrate how, all through the summer, the harmless and magic-like attraction of the fishing-rod led us on by the side of rocks and lonely pools where the light of any star could never reach, to lonesome waterfalls among the hidden windings of mountain brooks. These memories can never be effaced from my mind. Even at this I can recapture the some estatic feelings with which I watched from the top of some hill on sun-lit afternoons, the paper-kite among clouds, soft like fleece, tugging at the string like a spirited horse pulling hard at its reins ; or on some windy days I watched it going up from the grassy plain, flying up in the teeth of a strong wind and then suddenly plunging downwards, overpowered by the stormy wind.

Lines : 499-543 : O you humble cottages in which we used to live, you had also your own share of disciplining and moulding my mind. It is beyond me to forget you as you looked so beautiful standing among the lovely and pleasant fields.

In which ye stood ? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
Ye dealt out your plain comforts ? Yet had ye
Delights and exaltations of your own.
Eager and never weary we pursued.
Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire
At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate
In square divisions parcelled out and all
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head
In strife too humble to be named in verse :
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
Cherry or maple, sate in close array,
And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on
A thick-ribbed army ; not as in the world,
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
Even for the very service they had wrought,
But husbanded through many a long campaign.
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions : some, plebeian cards
Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth,
Had dignified, and called to represent
The persons of departed potentates.
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell ?
Ironic diamonds—clubs, hearts, diamonds spades,
A congregation piteously akin !
Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
Those sooty knaves, precipitated down
With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven,
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,
Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,
And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained
By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad
Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth.
And, interrupting oft that eager game,
From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
The pent-up air, struggling to free itself
Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud
Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.

L. 510. In...out : Refers to the popular game of naughts and crosses. *L. 522. Plebian* : Of low rank. *L. 525. Departed potentates* : Kings and Queens dead and gone; here the missing cards of Kings and Queens. *L. 528. A congregation piteously akin* : A gathering pathetically similar; soiled and shabby cards. *L. 531. Vulcan out of heaven* : Vulcan was driven out of heaven by Zeus. He was the Roman god of cheats, robbers etc., and was also the god of black-

I cannot also forget your simple and refined countenance with which you extended your homely comforts to us. You had also your own joys and inspiration to offer to us. With all eagerness and without getting tired we enjoyed our games and other pleasant diversions at home, sitting by the warm peatfire in the evenings. At such times with pencil and smooth slate on which, after drawing squares, we had scribbled carelessly crosses and zeroes and we puzzled our heads by scheming and struggling against one another; and all these now seem to be too humble to be narrated in verse. Or, we sat round the bare table made of snow-white fir, cherry or maple wood, forming a very close group and played Loo ,or Whist (games of cards) leading our cards as if they were sturdy soldiers of an army. And we never neglected or rejected them, as is usual with this world, ungratefully after they had rendered useful service, but preserved them carefully for many a later battle (game of cards). It was a shabby and soiled pack of cards and many of them had to perform the function of some other cards. Some common or ordinary cards of low rank were raised up to a new dignity by fate and made to play the pole of missing kings and queens. The cards used to fall on the table with a thud.

There were false cards representing clubs, hearts, diamonds or spades, but all looked equally soiled and shabby. These or spades, offered very cheap matter to our boyish intelligence. (Or they offered the chief subject for the boy, to exercise their intelligence.) The black knaves were thrown forcefully on the table with jeers and mocking remarks just like those received by Vulcan (Roman god of blacksmiths when he was turned out of heavan (by Zeus). Then there was the ranking ace which without its polish and brightness looked like the eclipsed moon, or there were the queens which seemed to shine faintly after losing almost all their past glory. And the kings also seemed bitter and morose as their royal faces had grown shabby. Meanwhile rain had been falling outside continuously or a chilly, biting frost continued without any noise, but with great fury. From time our eager game of cards was disturbed by a loud and prolonged yelling sound from hills and meadows. This was caused by the pent up air trying hard to free itself from under Esthwaite's frozen surface which cracked with a roaring sound that can be compared with the howling of the wolves in groups along the gulf of Bothnic (in the Baltic sea).

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smiths. *L. 544. Bothnic main :* The gulf of Bothnia at the northern end of the Baltic sea. *L. 545. Sedulous :* Diligent, working steadily.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
And made me love them, may I here omit
How other plesures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt,
Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which, seem in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual charm; that calm delight
Which. if I err not, surely must belong
To those first born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation, drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by impending clouds.
The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,
And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills
Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these
A stranger, linking with the spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense
Of quietness or peace , yet have I stood
Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league
Of shining water, gathering as it seemed
Through every hair-breadth in that filed of light
New pleasure like a bee among the flowers.

L. 545. By extrinsic passion : By a feeling working externally, that is the boyish games he played. *L. 550. Tempestuous time :* Passionate person of boyhood. *L. 555. First born affinities :* Early spmpathies or attractions, inborn instincts and impulses. *L. 557. Dawn of being :* Early childhood. *L. 560. Twice five summers :* The first ten year of Wordsworth's life *Ll. 564-65 Drinking... pleasure :* Deriving a pure sensuous or physical pleasure. *Ll. 569. The...shade* The sea brightened up with the rising of the moon. . *Ll. 573-75. Linking...sight :* He could not remember to have seen such a sight ever before. *L. 580. Vulgar joy :* Sensuous pleasures.

Lines 544-558. I have, no doubt, taken enough pains to narrate how nature by a feeling or passion, whose source was purely external first, filled my heart with grand and beautiful forms and images of this earth and then made me love them all. But I should not fail to mention that I have also experienced certain other pleasures which arose from a more refined or spiritual source. During the passionate and most active period of my boyhood days I have often enjoyed those pure and sacred sensuous pleasure. But they were so simple and so pure that they seemed to have a more refined or a spiritual touch. That serene pleasure, which if I am not mistaken, must surely belong to those early sympathies or inborn instincts which make the child's new-bound existence harmonise with the existing earthly things of life and which in the very early years of our earthly life, make the bond of union between life and joy.

Lines 559-580. Definitely I remember the time when our earth with seasonal changes and the first ten years of my life imprinted on my mind the beauty of the different seasons of the year. Even at that period of life I could be in spiritual communion, though unconsciously, with eternal beauty of the universe and thus could also derive pure sensuous pleasure by gazing at the silver mist rising up in a curling manner or at the calm and smooth surface of lakes, seas and rivers darkened by over-hanging clouds. The sands of Westmoreland, the rocks and boys of cumberland's rocky shores can still feel the deep feelings experienced by me in those days. They can bear witness to the fact that very often in the evening when the sea had cast off its gloomy shade of the evening and brightened up under the light of the rising moon which was noticed and welcomed by the Shepherds from their huts in distant hill, how I used to stand there gazing at the scene without any such fancies or recollections as I have now. I could not remember to have seen a similar wonderful sight ever before, nor feel at that moment any special sense of peace and serenity in my soul. Yet I used to stand there and while my mind would wander over the vast expanse of the glittering water of the sea deriving pleasure from every inch of that sight. I felt like sucking in beauty from the minutest part of the scene as a bee sucks in honey from the flowers.

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
And is forgotten ; even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield;—the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things ; sometimes, 'tis true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents
(Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturer Seasons called them forth
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
—And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
Wearied itself out of the memory,
The scenes which were a witness of that joy
Remained in their substantial lineaments
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
Were visible, a daily sight ; and thus
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness,
So frequently repeated; and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day was distant, did become
Habitually dear, and all their forms
And changeful colours by invisible links
Were fastened to the affections.
I began
My story early—not misled, I trust,
By an infirmity of love for days
Disowned by memorey—ere the breath of spring
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows :

L. 583. Giddy bliss : supreme delight. *L. 589. Collisions :* Violent contacts. *L. 593. Collateral objects :* Objects or shapes similar those seen before. *L. 594. Albeit :* Although. *L. 595. Maturer seasons :* Advanced stage of life with maturity of thought. *L. 596. Impregnate :* Imbue, saturate; load with. *L. 600. Substantial lineaments :* Main and prominent features; essential features. *L. 611. Invisible links :* Bonds that cannot be seen. *L 612. Fastened to the affections :* Firmly fixed in his heart; connected with his primary impulses. *Ll. 615-16. Ere the breath...winter snows :* These lines have been given different interpretations by different critics. However, the poet probably wanted to say that he started writing his autobiography before his creative powers were fully mature for such a great task. Thus his premature

Lines : 581-612 : Thus, very often in the midst of those fits of sensuous pleasures which almost always accompany a child in the course of his different activities, amid the rapturous delights, which like a tempest, infuse excitement in the blood but are very soon forgotten, even at such moments I beheld flashes of momentary visions (of divine beauty) like the sudden flashes reflected from a shield; as a result of which, the earth with all the common objects of nature communicated to me things worth remembering (of divine origin). There is no doubt that all these were often the result of chance encounters and strange accidents-like strange combination of events supposed to be done by mischievous fairies; yet they were not entirely useless. Perhaps they might impress on my mind new sights and scenes closely related with such experiences in the past. All these sights and objects seemed to be without any power to inspire me at that time and were likely to remain hidden in the subconscious until they were recollected by me at a later date when my mental powers would be quite mature, and then they would infuse inspiration and exalt my soul. And even if the sensuous pleasures faded out of my memory due to their very excess and great intensity the scenes which were a witness of my deep joys remained firmly impressed on my mind with all their essential features and were constantly visible to my mind's eye. In this way through the solemn ministry of fear, through repeated joys and pleasures and through the force of dimly recollected emotions and feelings that reminded me of the forgotten things of the past, these bright beautiful and sublime scenes became dear to me as a matter of habits and were closely connected by some invisible bonds with my primary passions and emotions with all their different forms and changing colours. Of course the time for realising their profound significance was reserved for a distant date.

Lines : 614-636 : I began to narrate my story from the days of my early childhood and while doing so I hope I have not been misled by my mistaken or fond love for those forgotten days of childhood. To me this premature venture seems to be as out of season as the planting of snowdrops in winter before the advent of spring.

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venture seemed to be as out of season as the planting of snowdrops in winter, before the advent of spring.

Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend ! so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.
Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch......
Invigorating thoughts from former years ;
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature
To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest : need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments, if the song be loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining ?
One end at least hath been attained ; my mind
Hath been revived, and if this genial mood
Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
Through later years the story of my life.
The road lies plain before me;—'t is a time
Single and of determined bounds ; and hence
I choose it rather at this time, than work
Of ampler and more varied argument,
Where I might be discomfited and lost :
And certain hopes are with me, that to thee
This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend !

Ll. 620-21 Fetch...formes years : The poet expects that the recollection of his childhood days will refresh and strengthen his mental powers. *Ll. 631-32. Those recollected...things :* The happy memories of childhood that possesses a dream-like charm. *L. 635. Visible...shining :* The distant memories of childhood has remained as bright and distinct to him as a scene brightened by sunlight. *L. 639. The story of my life :* The poet's story of life of subsequent years will be continued in the succeding books of 'the Prelude, *Ll. 642-43. Work of argument :* Work of a wider scope requiring greater intellectual power-that is 'The Recluse.

O my friend (Coleridge), I further hope that you, with all your eager sympathies for me, will never feel that I have tried to elaborate a dull story by narrating it in a feeble and foolish manner. Meanwhile it has been my earnest hope that recollection of my childhood days might refresh my thoughts and restore the unsteady balance of my mind. I might also meet proper self accusation, the impact of which would urge me on to greater effort to achieve something nobler. But if all such hopes prove futile and if I am unable either to understand myself or to enable you to know thoroughly the mind of your beloved friend, still I never expect any harsh judgment from you even if you find me quite unwilling to give up my thoughts about those happy memories of childhood that possesses the enchantments of a dream and about the beautiful sights and scenes of nature and the sweet feelings and excitements that take us back to the past, that seem to transfrom our memories of distant childhood days into a vivid and bright scene flooded by sunlight.

I have, at least, succeeded in achieving one important object. My mind has been refreshed and reanimated. If this happy mood of mine persists I shall be able to narrate soon the story of the later years of my life. The path lies clear before me, because it is a simple theme of well defined limits. I have selected this theme for the present and not a work of a wider scope, requiring greater intellectual power. Such a theme might have embarassed and baffled me. Moreover, I entertain definite hopes that this labour on my part would be welcome to you, my honoured friend, without fail.

17

Explanations : "The Prelude" : Book I

(1) For I, me though..............harmonious verse

(Lines : 31 to 45)

These are the closing lines of the Preamble to Book I of *The Prelude.* Wordsworth is on his way from Bristol to Racedown, where the poet and his sister, Dorothy, settled down in the autumn of 1796. The poet's heart is full of immense joy as he has been able to leave that vast city of London where he languished for long just like 'a discontented sojourner'. He has left behind that dusty, dirty city full of deafening din and clamour. A gentle breeze from heaven has soothed and comforted his body and mind and has chased away the gloom of dispair from his soul. Gone is that burden of a cramped and artificial life, and the poet is now as free as a bird to settle down wherever he likes and to follow the vocation of his choice. But at the sametime it strikes him that the newly-earned liberty will be of no avail without any creative activity.

Then the poet feels a correspondent breeze of poetic inspiration rising up in his soul. This wind of inspiration is mild and gentle in the beginning, but slowly it grows into a tempest, into a sort of poetic frenzy. This excessive urge overwhelms the poet and almost thwarts all his creative activity. But Wordsworth is thankful to both, the external breeze as well as the wind of inspiration, and their pleasant powers. Both of them have combined to bring about a thaw in the "long-continued frost" in his soul, that is, they will soon help the poet to discard the sense of dejection and lethargy that invaded his soul during the unhappy days of his life in London. They bring with them a great promise, high hopes for days of creative activity, reminding him of the swiftly flying time and the shortness of human life. The poet is going to utilise this period of pleasant leisure by meditating on deep philosophical subjects and by writing opetry of a lofty and sublime order—poems of prayer that are in tune with hours of morning and evening. The poet's idea of "punctual service high" reminds us of Milton's sonnet, *On his Blindness*,

where the poet expresses his desire to serve his Master with the One "talent" He has blessed him with.

(2) It was a splendid evening.....................utter silence.
(Lines 94-99)

We know that Wordsworth was proceeding towards Racedown where the poet and his sister, Dorothy, settled down in the autumn of 1795. He was sometimes as eager as a truant or a fugitce or as earnest as a pilgrim to reach the chosen Vale of Racedown.

On his way, it was a lovely evening when his soul once more made an attempt to measure its own power and ability to undertake a noble task. He felt within himself a creative stir and poetic thoughts came crowding into his mind. These lofty thoughts and ideas seemed to play upon his soul as the wind on the Aeolian harp. Here the Poet's soul stands for the Aeolian harp and his poetic thoughts for Aeous, the god of the wind in Greek mythology. So the thoughts were playing upon the harp of his soul. But soon it was evident that his soul had been deceived as it failed to respond to the wind of inspiration to create a harmonious pattern. So his thoughts and ideas, like the notes of music, grew weaker and fainter and finally died away completely. And then there was absolute silence in his soul, as there was no inkling of poetic activity any more.

Note : In Greek mythology Aeolus is the wind-god and nature is his harp. Aeolean harp is a many-stringed instrument that produces musical sounds on exposure to the wind.

(3) And now it would..................lasts too long.
(Lines 132 to 145)

The poet has already told us that whenever he desired to tackle some lofty theme, "by Milton left unsung", he faced serious obstacles and hindrances. But still he does not give way to dejection or despair. The poet makes up his mind to give up his high ambition of writing a sublime epic on some exalted theme. For the present he wants to remain satisfied with some humbler type of poetic activity. Actually during 1798 Wordsworth wrote some simpler poems like *Cumberland Begger*, *The Discharged Soldier* and also the poems to be included in the *Lyrical Ballads* and *Peter Bell.*

Then he tells Coleridge that the poet, like the lover, still has his moments of extreme passion and fits of poetic frenzy. The poet might have in mind the famous lines from Shakespeare's *A Mid Summer Night's Dream.*

> The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.

At such times Wordsworth is not always content with brooding or meditating on some particular theme just like the mother-dove sitting on its eggs in a pensive mood. He is rather goaded by poetic frenzy, like a dove driven by the stormy wind, to search the groves

of poetry for some exalted theme. The poet is now under the sway of such an overpowering emotional stress. There is nothing to find fault in a poet for this. The poet feels a bit embarassed as frenzy is rather continuing for too long a spell.

These lines reflect the poet's capacity to analyse state of mind and his great interest in psychology. This power is revealed also in many other poems. And that is why, according to Emile Legouis, poetical psychology is his triumph".

(4) This is my lot...............renders nothing back
(Lines 261-269).

Wordsorth's great ambition was to write a sublime epic. After process of self-examination he discovered that he had all the necessary equipment for achieving such a grand purpose. Then he was in quest of a suitable theme for his great work and ranged over the noble and daring deeds of great national heroes, medieval knights, or of the legendary figures of mythology and ancient tales. But none of them seemed to him striking enough for a sure choice. Finally, he felt a strong urge in him to compose a philosophic poem dealing with some great or universal truth which offers strength and sustenance to our day to day existence. This lofty poem should be as sublime and highly melodious as the music of Orpheus, the great musician in Greek mythology, playing on his lyre. But he recoiled from such an arduous task, seeking consolation from the fond hope that his advancing years would endow him with maturer powers of thinking and clearer insight to compose such a great poem as will defy time's tyranic claim.

Thus, the poet became a helpless prey to indecision and procrastination, to contradictory thoughts and passions. He always found some drawback in his chosen theme, or often he felt himself so much lacking in perfection that he deliberately wanted to give way to lethargy and indolence, seeking an escape from the futile distractions of his mind. Out of dejection and despair he almost reconciled himself to his fate, as he realised that he was slowly gravitating towards his grave without achieving any thing grand or noble. He was just like an unfaithful manager of an estate who had received a lot from his master without rendering him any useful service in return.

This is another typical Wordsworthian simile reminding us again of Milton's famous sonnet, *On his Bindness*.

Here again we find Wordsworth examining the human mind from a psychological stand point or trying to analyse the working of the subconcious mind. This is why many a critic considers him to be the first English poet exploring this field.

(5) Dust as we are..........suit her aim.
(Lines 340-356)

Here we come across a few lines which are partly philosophical and partly psychological. Such thoughtful lines not only in

The Prelude but in many other famous poems such as the *Immortality Ode*, *Tintern Abbey* and some others—reveal lucidly the poet's philosophy of nature and man and go long way to establish his claim to be a philosophical poet.

Wordsworth has already told us how he grew up in his childhood days 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear' amidst lovely as well as sublime surroundings of nature.

Here the poet tells us that our physical body is destined to die but our soul is immortal. Just as the melody of music is composed by harmonising different notes, so also our immortal soul is formed by harmonising different and opposing elements. Nature works in a mysterious way. It is beyond our intelligence to fathom the art or workmanship with which nature combines various discordant or opposing elements into a harmonious whole.

The poet, in the various stages of his life, has undergone experiences of worries, fear, vexation and wearines. But the most wonderful thing is that all these discordant and oppossing elements were fused into a harmonious combination to foster the growth of his soul, and thus played a very useful part to enable him to attain a calm and peaceful existence. Nature's ministry is sometimes mild and gentle and at some other times it causes slight and mild fear. It is as slight as the fear that is sometimes caused by the sudden flash of lightning that brightens up the sky. On some other occasion Nature's discipline was much more severe, to create a more tangible effect on his mind. The poet is very much thankful, to Nature for all these means, pleasant or painful employed by her for the healthy growth of his mind and soul. He is all praise for her for the ultimate peace and serenity attained by his soul. In such passages we get a vital part of Wordsworth's Nature—philosophy and they remind us of such famous lines as ;

> The girl, in rock and plain,
> In earth and heaven, in glade and power,
> Shall feel an overseeing bower,
> To kindle and restraint.

In this passage we find Wordsworth following the associationist or the empiricist philosophers who lay special stress on the early background and enviornment. According to their view the character of a man develops during childhood and youth as a direct result of his physical experiences and the feelings of pleasure and pain from such experiences.

(6) Wisdom and spirit......beasings of the heart

(Lines : 401-14)

In the foregoing passage Wordsworth has described that well-known boating incident which is one of the best illustrations of how poet's soul was fostored by Nature's ministry of fear. Here also we find an echo from Hartley's associationist psychology that tells us that our early environment fashions the personality. Another remark-

able passage is here from the pen of Wordsworth with the sublimity or an epic style. It gives us a very clear exposition of his Nature-religion,

It begins with an apostrophe to the Wisdom and Spirit of the universe. To him this wisdom and spirit is the Soul of Nature, is as eternal as human thought and transmits life and movement to all objects and forms of this universe. It is the essence, the only reality. This idea seems to be somewhat akin to some doctrines of Vedanta and the Upanishads. The poet further tells us that this very soul of Nature took from the earliest days of infancy, upon itself, the task of shaping an intimate relationship between the human passions of his soul and the noble and everlasting objects of nature, such as lofty mountains, shining lakes and streams and the vast blue dome of the sky.

He could be in silent communion with Nature amidst her lovely and sublime sights and scenes day in and day out. Nature purified his thoughts and passions through her ministry of both pain and fear, and as a result of this exaltation of mind and heart took place. This enabled him to recognise a grandeur, a loftiness even 'in the beatings of the heart'. In short, the association of thoughts and emotions of his childhood days with the beautiful as well as the sublime objects of this universe engendered in him a profound confidence in the greatness and grandeur of his own nature.

(7) And to the combat.........departed Potentates.

(Lines 516-525)

In their humble cottages at Hawkshead Wordsworth and his laymates used to amuse themselves with various indoor games in long winter evenings. One of the interesting games was that of cards.

Often they sat round a bare table forming a close group and with all boyish excitement played Loo or Whist, two of the popular games of cards. The poet is describing the progress of the game and the condition of the cards in a rather mock-heroic one. They had a very shabby and soiled pack of cards. The cards have been compared with a 'thick-ribbed army', that is a strong army of sturdy soldiers. The shabby individual cards were like veteran soldiers of many battles, now grown old and weak with age. Generally our ungrateful world rejects such invalid ones even if they had rendered useful service in the past. But they never did so. They led their cards as if they were stout soldiers of a powerful army. They preserved these shabby cards for many a later battle—that is for many round of games. Funnily some of the individual cards were missing and their function had to be performed by some other cards. Thus, some 'plebian cards' common or ordinary, cards of low rank-were raised up to a new dignity, as if by fate, and had to play the role of missing kings and queens.

These lines definitely brings to our mind Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*—a grand mock-heroic poem. According to Prof. De Selicourt Wordsworth 'could hardly fail, when he wrote the passage, to recall the famous game of cards in *The Rape of the Lock*. Even the phrase, 'plebian card', has been borrowed from that celebrated poem of Pope.

> Gained but one trump, and one plebian card. [Canto III, 54]

(8) "......how I have felt......life and joy."

(Lines 549—58).

In many a preceding passage of this poem the poet has taken a lot of pains to explain how the lovely and sublime shapes and sights of nature had been a source of ecstasic delight to him since his very infant days. But in that passionate period of his early days he was deeply moved only by the sensuous beauty of nature, when :

> The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion............

The joy, no doubt, filled his heart with beautiful forms and images of nature and made him love them all. But these pleasures were so pure and simple without any urge to interpret, that to the boy's deep sensibility they seemed to have a more refined or spiritual source. Even as a child he could also experience some deep, serene delights whose source was some mysterious charm, 'unborrowed from the eye'. But how can a child have such deep experiences of joy and jubilation when our earthly existence is full of miseries and misfortunes ? And to answer this question the poet takes recourse to Platonism—that is Plato's doctrine of pre-existence. This view, that our soul had an heavenly existence before coming into this miserable world, forms the core of that grand poem *The Immortality Ode*. There we find such lines as :

> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had else where its setting
> And cometh from afar :

As Heaven lies about us in our infancy, the child has also recollections of his divine origin and has the visions of divine beauty and grandeur. And these inborn instincts, these visions and recollections make the child happy and enable him to adjust himself to his newly-acquired earthly existence.

18

Critical Summary : "The Prelude" : Book II

Introduction

In the very opening lines of Book II Wordsworth tells Coleridge that 'thus far', *that is* in Book I, he has tried to describe the simple ways in which he passed his days of childhood and retrace how this life led him to love the beautiful sights and sounds of nature, such as babbling brooks, vernal woods or vast stretch of green fields. He continues this account in Book II and his main purpose is to trace the growth and development of his love of nature and its bracing influence on his mind and creative sensibility.

Love of Nature in its infancy

We know from the poet that during the first period of his life of childhood days his passion for Nature was in its infancy was kept enthused and nourished by his surroundings without any conscious and deliberate effort on his part—'By nourishment that came unsought'. In those days their exciting life full of noisy games and sports continued from week to week and month to month ; and in summer such games went on till darkness prevailed over land and sky—"when all the ground was dark, and the twinkling stars/Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went".

Not to be proud of maturity

Next the poet tells us that we should never have any feeling of pride for the improved powers of our mind or considerable intellectual development or for an enhanced sense of virtue which the eyars of maturity bring. Nothing can be compared with the thrills and excitement of youth, and even the wisest human beings someitmes yearn for uniting the verve and zest of boyhood days with the earnestness of later years of life.

Two-fold existence and recollections

The poet also feels at this grown up stage some sort of change in him. A soothing spirit seems to bring comfort and solace to his

bodily frame. But his life at Hawkshead school was sportive and boisterous. When he mediates upon them, he becomes conscious of two-fold existence—his present life as a grown-up person and the vague existence of his childhood days. He then recalls with some sort of nostalgia the rough piece of rock, now usurped by an Assembly-room, round which their boy-hood game were held on star-lit nights and also remembers the old dame after home they named. that piece of rock.

Second stage of attitude towards nature

The poet's life in those days were, no dohbt, boisterous ; but slowly his attitude toward nature underwent some change. He longed for calmer and sober type of pleasures and only those sports and games that were closely attached to the beautiful sights and forms of nature seemed to be really pleasing and enjoyable to him. In the previous stage he has not very much conscious of his natural surroundings. But now he consciously felt a desire to have Nature 'collaterally attached' to all their plans for all sorts of games and pleasures. This may be called the second stage of Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature.

Rowing competition with happy endings

Next we find Wordsworth describing his rowing competitions over the Windermere Lake—their principal means of recreation at the advent of the summer. They used to row to various islands-some one resounding with songs of melodious birds or some one famous for the ruins of a well-known church dedicated to Virgin Mary. But such rowing competitions with happy endings never gave rise to any undesirable sense of rivalry or jealousy, of grief or dejection. The pride of the winner in his strength and vanity for his superior tact in rowing were curbed and controlled. As a result of this they gathered a calm and srene independence of the heart; and due to such experiences some sort of quiet bashfulness and modesty began to grow in poet's mind and he learnt to sustain himself quite well even in solitude, feeng—some "The self-sufficing power of solitude."

Riding excursions

In the next few lines (78-137) Wordsworth talks of his exciting pleasures of horse-riding and their joyful journeys to distant places fully enjoying their simple but-nourishing meals their 'Sabine fare'. When they had more pocket money to hire horses from the innkeeper and sometimes would spur them on to a distant place where stood the ruins of an ancient temple. Even during such hours fraught with boisterous delights he could feel the calm and serenity of a holy place like that. The return journey was also equally exciting. But even at such delightful moments the poet was quite aware of the lovely sights and sounds of nature. Whenever he slowed down the speed of the horse just to have a bit of relation or galloped hard with a thundering noise, rising from the hoofs over the even sand lit up by

the gleaming moon-beams, the poet was conscious of a personality permeating all the beautiful and sublime sights of nature :

"Even in these joyous time I sometimes felt your Prasence..."

Visit to a tavern Nature sought for her own sake

Next Wordsworth goes on to describe his memorable visits to a tavern, the White Lion, that stood half-way on the eastern bank of long Winander, within a sickle-shaped lovely boy and tells us about another stage of development in the growth of his love for nature (Lines : 198-203). This spot with its lovely surroundings, with the memories of by-gone days full of various pleasures and pastime remained very dear to the poet through-out his life. There was a nice garden on a slope and a small wood below them and through the leaves of the trees and over the tree tops glimpses of water were visible. There they took part in lot of games and had also refreshments in plenty. After a day's excited games and sports, just before night-fall they used to row back in their light boat over the lake in a lazy mood. Sometimes they left the musician of their party, Robert Greenwood, on some island. He would sit alone on a rock and play upon his flute. At such hours, the quiet scene with the calm water of the lake filled his soul with serene pleasure and the world seemed to be bathed in a dream-like beauty. In this way Wordsworth's sympathies or spiritual powers enlarged and familiar and common objects of nature became dearer to him day by day. He then began to love the sun not for its life-giving power but because it bathed the hill in its raidant beauty at dawn and touched the western hills with its golden fingers before it set in the west. Due to such feelings the moon also, gloriously hanging mid-way between the hills, became very dear to him. At such ecstatic moments he could forget all his aims and purposes of life and due to overwhelming happiness even' his blood seemed to flow in his veins for the sake of its own pleasure. And then the poet very dearly speaks of another great change in his attitude towards Nature. In his earlier years of life Nature held a secondary position ; he has attached to the beautiful objects of nature because they were the background of his sports and pastimes. But this attachment became weaker day by day and now Nature 'was sought for her own sake." We may call this the third stage in the growth of Wordsworth's love for Nature. In the first stage, particularly in Book I, we found the poet loving the beautiful objects and scenes of nature only through the sports and pastimes and adventures of his boyhood days. In the beginning of the second Book (in lines 48-54) the poet has already spoken about the second stage of development :

"...when the winning forms of Nature were collaterally attached
To every scheme of holiday delight."

That is, in this second stage the poet would derive the pleasure only from those sports and pastimes that were connected with the objects of nature.

Mind can not be divided into water tight compartments

Then comes some passages with high philosophical observations rather a shout digression from the main theme (203-65). The poet emphatically tells us that it is not at all possible for him to fix a particular date or time at which this change (the third stage) took place in his mind. It is beyond our power to trace a thought or feeling to its precise origin. It is not at all possible to analyse human mind by applying the rules of geometry. It would be vain and foolish on anybody's part to try to point with a wand and say that this part of the river of his mind came from that particular fountain. Thus according to the poet consciousness is a unity. He ends by expressing his hope that his friend, Coleridge, will understand and appreciate his point of view that our mind or feeling can never be divided and subdivided into water tight compartments.

Observation on the childhood and the child-mind

Next in the same high philosophic mood the poet makes a few observations on childhood and the child-mind. The child can imbibe with all his soul, the feelings that find expression in his mother's eyes The central attractive force of his mother's love that seems to spread through his veins and the close link with his mother help the child to establish a relationship with his new world. Feeling has endowed the infant with power which in unison with the developing faculties of the sense creates, working as it were, like an agent of God's mind. So the child may be taken as the creator as well as the receiver, as an active as well as a passive agent. Hence, according to Wordsworth childhood is, in truth, the first stage of poetic spirit in human life. In most cases the poetic spirit or poetic activity begins to dwindle and decay in later years due to control of custom or conventions; but in some this poetic spirit continues to assert itself through all ups and downs of life.

More initimate contact with Nature and the visionary power

Next Wordsworth comes again to his main theme or central thought. The poet tells us that he has tried his best to show the means, that is his boyish games and sports, through which the child's vivid sense-impressions, a noble gift received at the time of his birth as a matter of right, were enhanced and sustained in his case. Now he feels that there lies a still more difficult path before him. He felt some sort of pangs and uneasiness from mysterious causes. The main supports—sports and adventures of boyhood days—of his affections were gone, but his love for Nature still remained unharmed, as if supported by its own lively spirit. Whatever he saw had supreme attraction for him and hence his mind lay open to more delicate and pleasing influences of Nature and he could have a more intimate contact with Nature. Due to his vigilent power of love he could observe the evanescent qualities of nature in the course of changing seasons and permanent relations between natural objects. Living things, changing seasons and the enchanting beauties of

nature were so much liked by him that during this period of life they made the poet's solitude more effective. Thus he experienced a joy of a much exalted kind. Often he walked alone under the serene star-lit sky and then he realised the power of sounds not marred by any visible sight. He would, sometimes, stand under the shelter of a rock and listen to the distant sounds of the impending storm—sounds that seemed to be the mysterious and super-natural language of the primeval earth. All these sublime sounds and objects of nature engendered in him an exalted and ecstatic mood and thence the poet drank 'the visionary power' or creative sensibility. And as his faculties went on maturing, the poet felt that to whatever extent these powers might develop there was still something great to aspire and pursue.

Realisation of unity in diversity

Then the poet tells us (Lines : 322-329) about the benign influence of calm and serene scenes of nature upon his mind. Not only in the midst of gloomy and noisy scenes but also among lovely and serene aspects of nature he had had a feeling of the existence of a visionary power or creative sensibility and of the unity and harmony underlying all the diversities of nature. These mystic experiences by Wordsworth very much resemble those by the Vedantic philosophers believing in absolute monism. And this consciousness, 'strengthened with a super added soul', filled his heart with ecstatic delight.

A dream—a prospect in the mind

Wordsworth then recalls his early morning walks in the company of his friend, John Flemming. Often the poet used to leave his cottage very early. No fire-place in the cottages was lighted at such an early hour and even the little thrush had not started its matins. He would be sitting by himself on some projecting hillock and the lonely valley seemed to be still lying in a peaceful slumber. At such times a sacred quietness pervaded his soul and he would completely lose the sense of his body and bodily eyes. After that whatever was visible seemed to be something within himself, something vague like a dream and seen only with the mind's eye—'a dream—a prospect in the mind'. Is not this blissful mystic mood of the poet-priest of nature very much akin to that of 'Samadhi' mentioned in our 'Vedanta' ! In some of the lofty lines of *Tintern Abbey* also we find the poet in the same mood :

> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep,
> In body, and become a living soul :
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.
>
> [Lines : 45 to 50]

Visionary power adding new glory to the beauty of nature

In those days Wordsworth moved in the midst of lovely scenes of nature with a feeling of deep religious love which was fed and

strengthened by the changing seasons of nature with its sunshine or snow, with its shade or showers during all the hours of day or night. But he still retained his creative ability of his earlier days and his contact with the work-a-day world could never weaken the power of his soul. A light or visionary power emanated from his soul and added a new glory and grandeur to the beauty of the setting sun and a fresh charm to the sweet melody of the birds, the resting breeze or the flowing fountains softly babbling to one another. And this inner light was chiefly responsible for his attitude of worship towards the objects of nature and the ecstatic delight that he derived from them. This 'spirit of religious love' may be taken to be the fourth or final phase of the poet's attitude towards nature.

Mystic experience of thread of unity running through all objects of nature

The poet now speaks about the ever-continuing process (of love for Nature) which was strengthened by observing or realising the common thread of unity running through all the different forms and objects of this universe. These affinities cannot be perceived by minds devoid of creative sensibility. The poet was then only seventeen years old. At this stage of life he saw blessings spread around him 'like sea'. He received so much from Nature with her overflowing soul that all his thoughts were 'steeped in feeling'. He felt like sharing all his emotions even with the inanimate objects of nature. He was really happy when he felt 'the sentiment of Being spread over all things, animate or inanimate, in this universe. And he experienced supreme joy or bliss communning with every form of creatures on earth or in the sky. It seemed all these beings sang the same song and this could be heard distinctly when the bodily ear forgot her physical functi n and became absolutely inactive. It is only spirit or mind of the poet who became aware of one and the same life shared by all the creatures of this universe.

Expressing gratefulness to Nature for moulding his character on right lines

Then the poet asserts that even if some 'pious mind' does not believe in his sacred faith in Nature, he would be failing in his duty as a human being if he does not express his deep sense of gratitude to the various forms and objects of nature—the lakes, the mountains, the sounding contracts and so many other sights and sounds of nature. From the very childhood Nature has fostered and nurtured his mind and senses, has been 'a safe guide to wisdom and goodness'. If he has been pure in heart in his youth, if he has been able to rise above petty desires and mean jealousies in spirits of his constant contact with the dusty world, it is all due to the benign influence of the gracious nature. If during a period of depression and disappointment as a result of the horrors of the French Revolution, he has been able to retain a 'Roman confidence' in the ultimate good and greatness of humanity, this is also due to the elevating influence of Nature. Nature has always fed his 'lofty speculations'

and has all through been a source of solace and joy for his troubled and distressed soul.

Both Coleridge and Wordsworth equally diligent in their devotion to Nature.

The closing lines (451-71) conclude with a respectful address to his friend, Coleridge. Coleridge was brought up in the big city of London and the poet was nurtured in the lap of Nature ; and though they had to travel by different roads, both of them reached one and the same goal. Coleridge has been a very earnest worshipper of Nature and the chief bond of kinship between them is that both of them are equally diligent in their devotion to Nature. Finally the poet wishes him a long and happy life expressing a sincere hope that his life would be a great 'blessing to mankind'.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

THE PRELUDE BOOK II

Text

Complete Paraphrase

Annotations

And

Explanations with Critical Comments

19

The Prelude : Book II

Text

School-Time (continued)

Thus far, O Friend ! have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked ;
Those chiefly that first led me to the love
Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet
Was in its birth, sustained as might befall,
By nourishment that came unsought ; for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult. Duly were our games
Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed ;
No chair remained before the doors ; the bench
And threshold steps were empty ; fast asleep
The labourer, and the old man who had sate
A later lingerer ; yet the revelry
Continued and the loud uproar : at last.
When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
Feverish with weary joints and beating minds.
Ah ! is there one who ever has been young,
Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride
Of intellect and virtue's self-esteem ?

Note : In Book I of *The Prelude* Wordsworth has already told us about the cause of the origin of this long and noble poem. In Book II the poet continues to narrate the account of his school days and at the same time tells us about the evolution of his mind and imagination in a lofty tone. In the very first five lines of this book he makes the point clear to us. This Book carries us to the 17th year of the poet's life.

L. 1. Friend : Coleridge ; *Ll. 1-2. Though-unvisited* : Many incidents and experiences which the poet left undescribed *Ll. 5-6. The passion-its birth* : Pure love of Nature was just newly-risen, was in

Paraphrase of the Text

Lines 1 to 46 : O Friend, (Coleridge) so for (in Book I) I have made an attempt to recapture and describe the simple ways in which I passed my childhood days after leaving out many incidents. I have mainly recalled those unforgettable memories that led me to love rivers, woods and fields. This passion or love for Nature was kept enthused and nourished by my surroundings without any deliberate effort on my part. In those days our exciting life full of noisy games and sports continued from week to week and month to month. In summer, these games, as usual, went on till there was any trace of light in the sky. By that time all the chairs would be removed from the door; there would be none on the benches or on the door-way of the house; after keeping awake for longer spell even the old man and the labourer were fast asleep. Even then we went on with our wild and noisy games and merry-making. In the end when darkness prevailed over the land and the gleaming stars appeared at the edge of huge black patches of clouds, we were back to our homes and retired to bed with an excited mind and an exhausted body. Anybody who has enjoyed the joys and pleasures of youth needs the warning that he should never have any feeling of pride for his improved powers of mind and a higher self-regard for his enhanced sense of virtue at a mature age.

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its infancy. *L. 6. Sustained*: Encouraged ; strengthened. *L. 7. Nourishment-unsaught* : In Book I the poet has told us that in the first stage, that is in his boyhood, he had a close association with the objects of external nature ; but this association or contact was indirect, and without any conscious seeking on his part. *L. 9. A round of tumult* : A series of exciting and noisy sports and merriments. *L. 10. Till the daylight failed* : Till sunset. *L. 14-15. Revelry-continued* : Boy Wordsworth and party went on playing noisily even after sunset. *Ll. 16-17. Twinkling stars-clouds* : Stars sparkling at the edge of huge black patches of cloud. This line shows Wordsworth's capacity to draw a whole scene in a few words and his power of minute observation of nature. *L. 18. Beating mind* : A mind stirred and excited. *Ll. 19-21. Ah ! is there-self esteem* : Anybody who has experienced the joys and pleasures of youth needs the warning that he should not entertain any feeling of pride for his improved intellect and greater sense of virtue at a mature stage of his life. In short, nothing, no achievement at a later stage of life, can compensate for the joyful experience of the early days of life.

One is there, though the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who covets not at times
Union that cannot be ;—who would not give
If so he might, to duty and to truth
The eagerness of infantine desire ?
A tranquillising spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,
That, musing on them, often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being. A rude mass
Of native rock, left midway in the square
Of our small market village, was the goal
Or centre of these sports ; and when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,
Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place
A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground
That had been ours. There let the fiddle scream,
And be ye happy ! Yet, my Friends ! I know
That more than one of you will think with me
Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame
From whom the stone was named, who there had sate
And watched her table with its huckster's wares
Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.

We ran a boisterous course ; the year span round
With giddy motion. But the time approached
That brought with it a regular desire
For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms
Of Nature were collaterally attached
To every scheme of holiday delight
And every boyish sport, less grateful else
And languidly pursued.

Ll. 23-26. Who covets not-infantine desire : Even the wisest and best men cannot but, sometimes, desire that impossible union, namely the continuance of the spirit of boyhood into the responsibilities of later life. That is, at a maturer stage of life even the wisest man yearns for the verve and zest of his early days for the fulfilment of his duty and for continuing the quest for truth. *L. 28. Corporeal frame* : Human body ; physical frame. *L. 29. Vacancy between me and those days* : The gulf between the present years of maturity and the past years of boyhood. *L. 30. Have-my mind* : Early days of boyhood seem to be still present in the poet's mind. *Ll. 31-33. That musing on-some other being* : The poet becomes concious of a two-fold existence when the poet meditates upon the days of boyhood. He tells, as if, his days of childhood have come back and so he is leading two parallel lives. But these two lives seem to merge with each other, so much so that they are almost co-existent. *L. 37. Thither I repaired* : I went to Hawkshead market square. *L. 40. Let the fiddle scream* :

Even the wisest and the best among men cannot but, sometimes, desire that impossible union-that is, a yearning to unite the verve and zest of boyhood days with the earnestness of later years to fulfil his duties and to carry on the quest for truth. A soothing spirit seems to bring comfort and solace to my bodily frame. It seems to me that there is a great gulf between the present years of my life and those early boyhood days the memories of which are still retained in my mind; and when I medidate upon them I become conscious of a two-fold existence-my present life as a grown-up man as well as the vague existence of my boyhood days.

In the middle of the square of our market village there was a heavy piece of rough rock and all our boyhood sports and games were held around it. When I came back to this place after a long interval I first went to that spot ; but that old grey piece of stone was no longer there and that spot of ours was occupied, as if by force by a decorated assembly room. The fiddle or violin may go on with its grating sound of music and may the listeners be satisfied. The stone may not be there, still I am sure that my friends will remember with me those pleasant, star-lit nights, and that old dame after whom we named that piece of stone. She used to sit there and diligently kept an eye on her table full of pedlar's wares for sale. This she did during the span of sixty years of her life.

Lines 47 to 54 : We lived a very noisy and tumultous life and the year seemed to be whirling on with a quick and dizzy movement. But soon, the time come when I felt a strong desire for a calmer and sober type of pleasures and also to have all our plans for all games and sports and other holiday enjoyments closely attached to lovely forms or objects of Nature ; otherwise they would have been much less pleasing and so were pursued with less interest and keeness.

The performance in assembly hall with its grating sounds. *L. 45. Huckster's wares* : A hawker's or pedlar's wares or articles. *L. 47. We ran a boisterous course* : We lived an excited and uproarious life. *Ll. 47-48. The yeargiddy motion* : The year seemed to be whirling past them. *L. 50. Winning forms* : Beautiful or attractive objects of nature. *Calmer pleasures* : Sober pleasures in place of those boisterous delights of early days. *L. 51. Collaterally attached* : connected by a close mutual relationship. *Ll. 53-54. Less grateful pursued* : If his games and sports were not connected with the 'winning forms of Nature', he could not derive from them the same pleasure and used to take part in them spiritlessly or indifferently.

When summer came,
Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,
To sweep along the plain of Windermere
With rival oars; and the selected bourne,
Was now an Island musical with birds
That sang and ceased not ; now a Sister Isle
Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown
With lilies of the valley like a field ;
And now a third small Island, where survived
In solitude the ruins of a shrine
Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served
Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race
So ended, disappointment could be none,
Uneasiness, or pain or jealousy ;
We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,
And the vain-glory of superior skill,
Were tempered : thus was gradually produced
A quiet independence of the heart ;
And to my Friend who knows me I may add,
Fearless of blame, that hence for future days
Ensued a diffidence and modesty,
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare !
More than we wished we knew the blessing then
Of vigorous hunger—hence corporeal strength

L. 56. The plain of Windermere : Windermere lake-just a few miles away from Hawkshead with seventeen islands. *L. 57. With rival oars* : Rowing the boat with oars with a spirit of competition. *Bourne* : limit ; goal. *L. 59. A sister isle* : Another island in Windermere known probably as Lily of the Valley. *L. 60. Umbrageous covert* : A shady and secluded spot. *Ll. 62-65. And now-chaunted rites* : Often they rowed to another island where stood the ruins of a church dedicated to Virgin Mary. There was time when religious ceremonies were held every day and songs were sung in praise of Virgin and the child. *L. 64. Our Lady dedicate* : Virgin Mary. *Ll. 69-71. Thus the pride-were tempered* : The pride of the conqueror in his strength and superior tact in rowing was curbed and controlled as everything was done in a spirit of joyful and healthy competition. *Ll. 71-72. Thus was—of the heart* : The following remarks by Prof. Havens explain the line nicely : "At Hawkshead, since the boys were not urged to excel one another but were taught to look inwards, not outwards, for standards in judging themselves, they developed a quiet independence; diffidency and modesty ensued since the victor's pride and vain glory were tempered." *L. 77. The self-sufficing power of solitude* : Even in solitude a person can sustain himself and may not feel lonely *L. 78 sabine* : pertaining to central Apennines portions of ancient Italy. *Sabine fare* : "Such simple country fare (food) as Horace partrook

Line 55 to 77 : At the advent of summer our principal means of recreation was to move quickly over the surface of Lake Windermere on joyful half-holidays and to have a healthy rowing competition. Sometimes our chosen goal was an island resounding with the musical sounds of the birds that seemed to be singing on without any break. At some other time our goal was some other near-by island that was sheltered by the shady oaks and was all sown over with lilies of the valley. And sometimes our goal was a third small island, where still remained the ruins of a lonely shrine. It was dedicated to Virgin Mary and songs of prayer in praise of Virgin were chanted there every day. Such rowing competitions with happy endings never gave rise to any undesirable feelings of sorrow, envy, discomfort or dejection. The victors as well as the vanquished were equally happy and all rested happily in a shady place. In this way the pride of the winner in this strength and vanity for his superior tact in rowing were curbed and controlled. As a result of this we slowly gathered a calm and serene independence of the heart. And without expecting any censure, I may add, for the sake of my friend who knows me well, that due to such experiences some sort of quiet bashfulness and modesty began to grow in me to become a part of my nature in future. I also learnt not to feel lonely and to sustain myself quite well even in solitude.

Lines78 to 114 : Our daily food was quite simple, as simple as the meals that Horance partook of on his sabine farm (in Italy). We then enjoyed, more than what was pleasant, that is derived extreme pleasure as a result of a keen appetite. And our bodily vigour and energy.

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of his sabine farm. "Simple food. (Horace was a poet of ancient Italy. *Ll. 81-82. Hence corporeal-delicate viands* : Their bodily vigour and energy was not undermined by dainty dishes.

Unsapped by delicate viands ; for, exclude
A little weekly stipend, and we lived
Through three divisions of the quartered year
In penniless poverty. But now to school
From the half-yearly holidays returned,
We came with weightier purses, that sufficed
To furnish treats more costly than the Dame
Of the old grey stone, from her scant board, supplied.
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground,
Or in the woods, or by a river side
Or shady fountains, while among the leaves
Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun
Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell
How sometimes, in the length of those half-years,
We from our funds drew largely ;—proud to curb,
And eager to spur on, the galloping steed ;
And with the courteous inn-keeper, whose stud
Supplied our want, we happy might employ
Sly subterfuges, if the adventure's bound
Were distant : some famed temple where of yore
The Druids worshipped, or the antique walls
Of that large abbey, where within the Vale
Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built,
Stands yet a mouldering pile with fractured arch,
Belfry, and images, and living trees,
A holy scene ! Along the smooth green turf
Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace
Left by the west wind sweeping overhead
From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers
In that sequestered valley may be seen,
Both silent and both motionless alike;
Such the deep shelter that is there, and such
The safeguard for repose and quietness.

Our steeds remounted and the summons given,
With whip and spur we through the chantry flew
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,

L. 81. Viands : articles of food. *L. 82. A little weekly stipend* : Very small weekly allowance given to the poet by Ann Tyson. *L. 87. The Dame* : Ann Tyson-Wordsworth lodged with her at Hawkshead. *L. 100. Sly subterfuge* Clever tricks. *L. 102 Druids* Priests of the ancient Britons. *L. 103. Large abbey* : An obbey in the vale of Nightshade, 21 miles from Hawkshead. *L. 106 Belfry* : bell tower. *L. 111. Sequestered* : Lonely ; out of the way. *L. 116. Chauntry* : Chantry ; chapel endowed to sing masses for founder's soul.

were never undermined by taking dainty dishes, as we were given a very small allowance during three quarters of the year and so had to live rather in stark poverty all the time. But we came back to school after our half-yearly holidays with a good amount of pocket-money and this helped us to enjoy better dishes, costlier than what the Dame (Ann Tyson) could supply us out of her small provisions. Thus we could have the pleasure of having rural-type dinners on cool grassy lawns in the woods or on the bank of a river or near a shady fountain ; and all the while the winds would be blowing softly among the leaves and steeped in delight we could not even feel the heat of the mid-day sun shining brightly round us. I hope, I won't be neglecting my aim if I narrate how, during those half years, we often used to spend a lot out of our funds. We felt elated to control a horse and was also very keen to spur on swiftly running steed. And if the goal of our horse-rides was a distant place we did not mind playing some clever tricks to hide the truth on the obliging innkeeper who met our need by supplying horses. Our goal sometimes might be some famous temple where in ancient times the Druids or the priests of the ancient Britons used to worship or it might be the ancient walls of that large abbey (Fountain Abbey) in the vale of Nightshade. In this abbey there stood a ruined church built in honour of St. Mary with its broken arch, bell tower and images ; only the trees were fresh and lively and all these presented a holy spectacle. Our horses would be grazing on the soft green fields. The west wind from the uproarious and disturbed sea would be blowing fast above our head, but still we had a feeling of peace and tranquility there. In that lonely valley there were trees and towers but all were silent without any movement. There we got such a pleasing shelter offering us quiet rest and solitude.

Lines 115 to 137 : After this we got upon our horses and the call was given to be ready for return journey. We used our whip and spur and dashed as if we were running a race, through the shrine and rode past the statue of the cross-legged knight.

And the stone-abbot, and that single wren
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave
Of the old church, that—though from recent showers
The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint
Internal breezes, sobbings of the place
And respirations, from the roofless walls
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops—yet still
So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird
Sang to herself, that there I could have made
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
To hear such music. Through the walls we flew
And down the valley and, a circuit made
In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth
We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
And that still spirit shed from evening air !
Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed
Along the sides of the steep hills, or when
Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore,
Within the crescent of a pleasant bay,
A tavern stood ; no homely,- featured house,
Primeval like its neighbouring cottages,
But 't was a splendid place, the door beset
With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within
Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine.
In ancient times, and ere the Hall was built
On the large island, had this dwelling been
More worthy of a poet's love, a Hut,
Proud of its own bright fire and sycamore shade

L. 118. Abbot : head of the abbey of monks. *Wren* : a kind of small song-bird. *123. Respirations* : Breathings ; breezes. *130. In wantonness of heart* : in a playful and reckless spirit. *L. 131. Scampered*: galloped. *Ll. 133-34. I sometimes presence* : Even at such moments of excited pleasure of the boy. Wordsworth was conscious of a personality in the rocks, streams and other objects of nature. *L. 140. A tavern* : a public house called the White Lion, where food and drinks were available. *L. 141. Primeval* : With a kind of ancient simplicity. *L. 143. Chaises* : travelling carriages. *Rooms and liveries* : servants for looking after horses and other uniformed attendants. *L. 144. Decanters* : Tumblers or fancy bottles with glass-stopper. *L. 145. Hall* : The impressive hall of the inn. *L. 146. Large island* : The reference is to Belle Isle. *L. 147. More worthy of a poet's love* : The building looked so beautiful in ancient times that it could fill a poet's heart with love and admiration. *L. 148. Sycamore* : a kind of fig tree.

The abbot and that lonesome wren which one day sang sweet songs in the naive of the old church, though the surrounding places were not so comfortable due to recent rain. The earth fanned by a gentle breeze seemed to let out sobbing sounds, from the roofless walls came the sounds of soft breathing and the ivy on the wall trembled in the soft breeze and shed large drops of water. All the while the unseen bird continued to sing to the shade so sweetly that I felt I could make my permanent abode there to live for ever just to listen to such fine songs. We rode fast by the wall and across the valley. Then in a playful and reckless mood we made a round and galloped homewards over the uneven land. O you rocks and streams, and that serene spirit that seemed to have descended from the evening air! Even at such delightful moments when we slowed down the speed of the horse just to have a bit of rest along the sides of the hills, or when we galloped hard with a thundering noise rising from the hoofs over the even sand lit up by the gleaming moon-beams from the sea-side, I was often aware of a personality permeating all those objects of nature.

Lines 138 to 197: Half-way on the eastern bank of long Winander, within a sickle-shaped lovely bay there stood an inn or a public house (The White Lion). This was not a plain type of building having a look of ancient simplicity like the cottages in the nighbourhood. It was a grand building with doors swarming with servants and uniformed attendants and carriages. Inside one could find fancy bottles and wine of blood-red colour. In days gone-by, before the hall was built on the large island (Belle Isle), this place was so attractive as to fill a poet's heart with love and admiration. Under the sycamore trees there was a hut that looked very beautifiul with a bright fire burning inside.

But—though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed
The threshold, and large golden characters,
Spread o'er the spangled sign-board, had dislodged
The old Lion and usurped his place, in slight
And mockery of the rustic painter's hand—
Yet, to this hour, the spot to me is dear
With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay
Upon a slope surmounted by a plain
Of a small bowling-green ; beneath us stood
A grove, with gleams of water through the trees
And over the tree-tops ; nor did we want
Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream.
There, while through half an afternoon we played
On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed
Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee
Made all the mountains ring. But, ere night-fall,
When in our pinnace we returned at leisure
Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
Of some small island steered our course with one,
The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there,
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
Alone upon the rock—oh, then, the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart, and held me like a dream !
Thus were my sympathies enlarged and thus
Daily the common range of visible things
Grew dear to me : already I began
To love the sun ; a boy I loved the sun,
Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge

L. 149. The rhymes were gone : Verses inscribed at one time over the entrance of the tavern were no more there. *L. 157. Bowling green* : a lawn for playing bowls. *L. 165. Pinnance* : a kind of light boat *L. 168. The Minstrel of the Troop* : the singer of the group ; the reference is to Robert Greenwood-Senior Fellow of Trinity college Cambridge. in after life. *Ll. 173-74, Sank down-like a dream* : made a very deep impression and gripped his soul firmly as a man is sometimes gripped by a stance-like stage of ecstacy in an enchanting dream. *175. Thus* : In this way through 'boyish fun and in scenes of natural beauty and by rare occasions when beauty unrelated to sports moved him. *Sympathies* : mental and spiritual powers and affections *Ll. 179-80 A pledge earthly life* : a symbol of the security of human life and a guarantee that we are alive ; 'a light which while we view we feel we are alive.'

There was a time when a few lines of poetry were inscribed over the gate, but they were no longer there. Once there was also a picture of a lion painted on the sign-board, but the old lion had been displaced and in its place there was the name of the inn inscribed in golden letters that seemed to mock at the rustic painter who painted it previously. But in spite of all its foolish glamour this place remains dear to me. The garden was situated on a slope topped by a grassy lawn for playing bowls. There was a small wood below us and through the leaves of the trees and over the tree-tops glimpses of water were visible. We were never in want of good refreshments such as strawberries and cream rich in taste. There, half through an afternoon we continued our games ; and whether a boy won a game by his own skill or by a lucky accident there was loud burst of applause that made the mountains ring and resound. But, just before night-fall when we rowed back in our light boat in a lazy mood over the shadowy lake, we sometimes turned our course towards the shore of some small island and left our musician (Robert Greenwood) on the island. Then we rowed away gently and he would sit alone upon the rock and play upon his flute. On such occasions the quietness of the scene and the calm water of the lake seemed to lie upon my soul with such a light burden that instead of oppressing me in any way it gave me a lot of pleasure. The sky at that time seemed to me more beautiful than ever before and made its way deep into my heart and overwhelmed me with a dream-like stage of ecstacy. In this way my sympathies or affections went on widening and the familiar and visible objects of nature became dear to me day by day. I had already begun to love the sun. But my love for the sun as a boy was quite different from the love that I felt in advanced years.

And surety of our earthly life, a light
Which we behold and feel we are alive;
Nor for his bounty to so many worlds—
But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
The western mountain touch his setting orb,
In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow
For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.
And, from like feelings, humble though intense,
To patriotic and domestic love
Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
For I could dream away my purposes,
Standing to gaze upon her while she hung
Midway between the hills, as if she knew
No other region, but belonged to thee,
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale!
Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake. But who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square?
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed?
Who that shall point as with a wand and say
'This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain'? Though, my Friend! art one
More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
Science appears but what in truth she is,
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
But as a succedaneum, and a prop
To our infirmity. No officious slave
Art thou of that false secondary power

Ll. 190-91. To patriotic...was dear: the poet loved the moon and this love was similar to his love for country and affection for his family. *L. 191 Anologous*: akin; similar. *L. 192. I could... purpose*: gazing at the moon he could be obvious of all his aims and purposes *L. 198. Those incidental charms*: pleasures and adventure of early years of life. *L. 201. Intervenient*: Secondary; intermediate. *Ll. 202-3. Now at length...own sake*: The beauties of nature now became the principal, the most important object of his interest. They were no longer appreciated indirectly. As regards Wordsworth's attitude to Nature, this is a new stage or third stage. Henceforth he sought nature for its own sake. *L. 203. Parcel out*: break up; divide. *L. 206. Individual*: particular; definite. *L. 214. Succedanium*: an inferior

In later years I loved the sun as a promise and guarantee of our earthly life, as a light that tells us that we are alive when we look at it and that bestows its generous gift on different regions of the universe. But in that early life I loved the sun because I had seen it bathing the hills in its radiant beauty in the morning and beheld the golden sun touching the western hills just before it set. At many such thoughtless hours, due to overwhelming happiness my blood seemed to flow in my veins for the sake of its own pleasure and I would draw my breath with extreme delight. Due to such feelings, powerful though humble, the moon also became dear to me ; and this love was akin to affection for our home and attachment for our country. I could forget all my aims and purposes while I stood and gazed upon the moon hanging midway between the hills. It seemed that she knew no other place and exclusively belonged to this valley and the old cottages and the valley also seemed to have a peculiar right to claim that the moon entirely belonged to them.

Lines : 198 to 232 : In earlier years of life I became attached to objects of nature because of the incidental charms, because they went along with their games and sports, but these became weaker and weaker day by day. Now I want to tell it clearly that Nature, which was holding so far a secondary or intermediate position in my life, became now the principal object to seek for its own sake. But it is not possible to analyse the human mind by applying rules of geometry that helps us to distinguish between a square and a circle. Nobody can trace a habit back to its exact origin. None can point out with a wand and say that this part of the river of his mind came from that particular fountain. My friend, you are a person who knows his own thoughts much better. You know about the real truth and scope of scientific knowledge. We may boast of it as a great achievement of mankind, but you know well that it is an inferior substitute for reality and a support for our weakness. You are never a blind in believer in the false scientific or analytical reason.

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substitute. *Ll. 215-16. No officious secondary power* : Addressing his friend, Colerdige, the poet says that, he is never a blind believer in the scientific or cold analytical reasoning.

By which we multiply distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
That we perceive, and not that we have made.
To thee, unblinded by these formal arts.
The unity of all hath been revealed,
And thou wilt doubt, with me less aptly skilled
Than many are to range the faculties
In scale and order, class the cabinet
Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase
Run through the history and birth of each
As of a single independent thing.
Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,
If each most obvious and particular thought,
Not in a mystical and idle sense,
But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,
Hath no beginning.
Blest the infant Babe,
(For with my best conjecture I would trace
Our being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
Rocked on his Mother's breast ; who with his soul
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye !
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense ;
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed :
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connect him with the world.

L. 221 Unity : According to Wordsworth 'Unity of all' can only be realised through imagination. He has expressed the same idea in Book I (Lines : 341-44) *Ll. 224-25. Class the...sensations* : to divide our different feelings and sensations into divisions or into water-tight compartments as if each had an independent origin and development. *Ll. 238-40. For him...of sense* : the 'dear presence' of the mother for the child has a superb virtue that illuminates and ennobles all the objects which the child preceives through his senses. *L. 240. Intercourse of sense* : Communication through senses. *L. 241. No outcast he* : the child is not at all alien or foreign to his earthly surroundings.

Ll. 243-44. The gravitation...the world : the child's close link with his mother and the mother's attraction for the child help to establish a relationship between him and his new world.

By which we increase differences at a high rate and then think that our little and weak boundries are things which we accept as realities, but never understand they are the creations of our own reasoning intellect. You have no blind faith in such false arts ; the underlying unity of all things in nature has been revealed to you (through imagination). I am, no doubt, much less skilled than you are, but still I hope that you will share my doubts about arranging our mental faculties in a definite order with gradations, dividing our feelings and sensations into water-tight compartments and then relating with a great flow of words the origin and development of each, as if it had an independent entity and existence. In fact, it is really an arduous task, a futile hope, to analyse the mind. The truth is that even a plain and particular thought cannot be traced to its exact origin by careful reasoning or analysis ; so the question of analysing the whole of mind including the imaginative and mystic aspect does not arise at all.

Lines : 233 to 264 : I shall trace the progress of earthly existence of man depending mainly on my faculty for conjecture or guess work. Blessed is the infant who is nursed in his mother's arms, who is rocked to sleep on his mother's breast. He can imbibe, with all his soul, the feelings that find expression in his mother's eyes. For the babe the 'dear Presence' of the mother has a superb quality that ennobles and adds a splendour to all the objects percieved by the child through his senses. The infant does not feel himself like a foreigner in his new earthly surroundings ; so he never feels confused and dejected. The central attractive force of mother's love that seems to spread through his veins and the close link with his mother help the child to establish a relationship with his new world.

Is there a flower, to which he points with and
Too weak to gather it, already love
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
Hath beautified that flower ; already shades
Of pity cast from inward tenderness
Do fall around him upon aught that bears
Unsightly marks of violence or harm.
Emphatically such a Being lives,
Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,
An inmate of this active universe :
For, feeling has to him imparted power
That through the growing faculties of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds.—Such, verily, is the first
Poetic spirit of our human life,
By uniform control of after years ;
In most, abated or suppressed ; in some,
Through every change of growth and of decay.
Pre-eminent till death.
From early days,
Beginning not long after that first time
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,
I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby this infant sensibility,
Great birthright of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
More difficult before me ; and I fear
That in its broken windings we shall need
The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing :

L. 257-58. Doth like receiver both : The mind of the child may regarded as an agent of god's mind. So, his mind does not merely receives sense impression from nature ; these are modified and transformed into new creations. Herein lies the poetic genius of the child. *L. 260 Verily* : in truth. *L. 260-61. Such verily—human life* : according to Wordsworth the poetic conciousness of man begins as early as infancy. In truth, this is the first stage of the development of the poetic spirit of man. So the child is a born-poet. *L. 265. Pre-eminent till death* : This creative imagination or poetic spirit remains dominant till the end. *L. 267-68. By intercourse...Mother's heart* : A silent communication is established between the mother and the child through the sensations of touch *L. 270. Infant sensibility* : 'vivid sense-impressions, delight in them and imaginative transformation of them. *L. 272. Augmented and sustained* : Increased and maintained. *L. 274. Broken Windings* : rough turnings of the road, that is the tough task to be confronted by the poet. *L. 275. Chamois' sinews* : Strength or muscles

If the child points out a flower, which he cannot gather with his weak hands, it shows that his mother's purest love for him has made a flower beautiful in his eyes. Even at this stage the child looks kindly at ugly things suggestive of harm and violence ; and this is due to feelings of pity the source of which is his inner tenderness. Such, being surely lives a forceful life, even though he is weak and helpless ; undoubtedly, he is a true inhabitant of this vital world. Feeling has endowed the infant with power which in unison with the developing faculties of the sense creates, working as it were, like an agent of God's mind ; so he may be taken as the creator as well as the receiver. He works or creates after establishing an affinity between him and the objects of nature seen by him. Hence, childhood is, in truth, the first stage of the poetic spirit in human life. In most cases this poetic spirit begins to dwindle in later years due to control of customs or convention; but in some cases this creative spirit continues to assert through all ups and downs of life.

Lines 265--322 : Starting from the very early days and not after first time when, as an infant, I held silent communication with my mother's heart through the sensations derived from physical contact, I have tried my best to show the means through which the child's vivid sense-impressions, a noble gift received at the time of his birth as a matter of right, were enhanced and maintained in me. Now, there lies a still more difficult path before me. I am afraid that to confront the rough turnings or the tough task I shall need muscular strength of an antelope and the easy flight and keen vision of an eagle.

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of a chamois—a wild mountain antelope. *The eagle's wing* : The easy flight and the keen vision of the eagle.

For now a trouble came into my mind
From unknown causes. I was left alone
Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
The props of my affections were removed,
And yet the building stood, as if sustained
By its own spirit ! All that I beheld
Was dear, and hence to finer influxes
The mind lay open, to a more exact
And close communion. Many are our joys
In youth, but oh ! what happiness to live
When every hour brings palpable access
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
And sorrow is not there ! The seasons came,
And every season wheresoe'er I moved
Unfolded transitory qualities,
Which, but for this most watchful power of love,
Had been neglected ; left a register
Of permanent relations, else unknown.
Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude
More active ever than 'best society'
Society made sweet as solitude
By silent inobtrusive sympathies
And gentle agitations of the mind
From manifold distinctions, difference
Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye,
No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
Sublimer joy ; for I would walk alone,
Under the quiet stars, and at that time
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or image unprofaned ; and I would stand,
If the night blackened with a coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.

L. 276. A trouble came into my mind : This line has aroused a lot of controversy among the critics like Garrod and Havens. The former says that the trouble was due to loss of his parents and according to the latter it was due to the 'tumult of adolescence.' The second view seems to be more reasonable. *L. 278. The visible world* : objects of nature. *L. 279. The props of my affections* : the sports and daring deeds of his boyhood days. *L. 280. The building* : Poet's love for nature. *L. 282. Finer influences* : pleasing influences of nature *L. 286-87. Palpable access of knowledge* : acquirement of knowledge with a direct feeling of pleasure. *L. 290. Transitory qualities* : short-lived or evanescent features. *L. 293. Permanent relations* : 'relations between natural objects.' *L. 297. Inobtrusive* : imperceptible, soft and subtle. *L. 298. Agitations* : thrills and excitations of mind.

At this time I felt some sort of uneasiness for some mysterious reasons. I was left alone to seek the visible objects of nature without understanding why I did so. The main supports (boyish games and sports) of my affections were gone, but the building (love for nature) still stood firmly without them, as if strengthened and supported by its own lively spirit. Whatever I saw attracted me and hence my mind lay open to more delicate and pleasing influences of Nature and could have a more exact and intimate contact with her. The joys of our youth is numberless ; but what a great joy it is to live when every hour helps us to acquire knowledge palpably. Then all knowledge was a thing of delight and there was no sense of sorrow. The seasons came and went; and every season brought with it some short-lived features which might have been overlooked had there not been this vigilant power of love. Hence they left a record of permanent relations, which would otherwise might have been forgotten. Therefore, living things, changing seasons and the beauties of nature were so much liked by me that they made my solitude more effective than the best society ; and society became as sweet as solitude by soft and imperceptible sympathies and by mind's mild thrill of discovery by perceiving so many distinctions and differences in objects-not like the careless and unwatchful eye that sees sameness every-where. Thus I experienced joy of an elevated kind. Often I liked to walk alone under the serene starlit sky and at such moments I realised the real power of sounds to bring about a feeling of exalted and ecstatic delight : these sounds were, in no way, debased or marred by any visible sight or form (due to darkness). And if the night became darker due to the impending storm, I would stand under a rock and listen to sounds that seemed to be the mysterious and supernatural language of the primeval earth or seemed to have their dwelling in distant winds.

L. 305. To breathe an elevated mood : To experience an ecstatic joy ; to feel exalted. *L. 305-6. By form or image unprefared* : not spoilt or marred by any other sights. as everything was invisible due to darkness. *L. 309. The ghostly—earth* : mysterious : or supernatural language of the anciant earth. *L. 310. Or make-distant winds* : weekly elmost inaudible sounds that seem to dwell in the raving winds at a distance.

Thence did I drink the visionary power ;
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation : not for this,
That they are kindered to our purer mind
And intellectual life ; but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscures sense
Of possible sublimity, whereto
With growing faculties she doth aspire.
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
Have something to pursue.
And not alone,
'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less, 'mid fair
And tranquil scenes, that universal power
And fitness in the latent qualities
And essences of things, by which the mind
Is moved with feelings of delight, to me
Came strengthened with a superadded soul
A virtue not its own. My morning walks
Were early ;--oft before the hours of school
I travelled round our little lake, five miles
Of pleasant wandering.
Happy time ! more dear
For this, that one was by my side, a Friend,
Then passionately loved; with heart how full
Would he peruse these lines ! For many years
Have since flowed in between us, and our minds
Both silent to each other, at this time
We live as if those hours had never been.
Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen
From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush
Was audible ; and sate among the woods

L. 311. Thence did...power ; the poet absorbed the visionary power, that is the power of creative imagination from all the lovely or sublime objects of nature. *L. 314. Kindred* : Related. *L. 315. Intellectual life* : lofty and spiritual life. *L. 321-22 That whatsoevr...to pursue* : All the time the poet would feel that, no matter how much his soul or different mental faculties had developed, and no matter how much his soul had gained, there was still something more to which he could aspire. *T. 323. Tumult* : wild and uproarious scenes of nature. *L. 324. Universal power* : 'visionary power' or 'creative sensibility. *L. 325-26. And fitness...of things* : the unsty of Nature, the harmony underlying all the devercities of nature. *L. 328. With a super added soul* : with increasen spiritual power. *L. 329. A virtue not its own* : an excellence that it does not usually possess. *L. 333. A friend* : John Fleming, a school fellow, who became a priest in later life. *L. 339. Lift our cottage latch* : open the door.

From all these sublime objects of nature I imbibed the visionary power or creative imagination and never considered these passing moods of vague but sublime pleasure without any value. It was not because they were related to our purer mind and spiritual life, but for the reason that the soul remembering how it gathered its past experiences, not exactly what it imbibed, retained some vague feeling regarding the possibility of the existence of an exalted world to which it aspired more and more with its maturing faculties. And as these faculties went on growing more and more, the soul seemed to feel that to whatever extent these powers might develop still there was something to aspire and pursue.

Lines—323-352 : Not only in the midst of gloomy and noisy scenes but also in lovely and quiet aspect I had had a feeling of the existence of a visionary power or creative sensibility and the oneness and harmony underlying all the diversities of nature even in their subtle forms. And this consciousness moved my mind with feelings of great joy and it was strengthened by an increased spiritiual power 'a virtue not its own' but extraneous. I used to have my morning walks quite early and before school time I made a complete round of our little lake. It was a pleasant ramble for five miles. That was really a happy time, and more so because one of my friends (John Flemming) whom I loved very dearly happened to be with me in those days. I am sure that his heart would be overflowing with joy when he would go through these lines of mine. We have been living separate lives for many years and we have also not communicated with each other for long ; so we are now living completely forgetful of those happy days of the past. Often I used to open our cottage door very early, even before any column of smoke could be seen rising from the fire place of human abode, or before the little thrush started its spring-time song.

Alone upon some jutting eminence,
At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.
How shall I seek the origin ? where find
Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt ?
Oft in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind.
'T were long to tell
What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
And what the summer shade, what day and night,
Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought
From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
To feed the spirit of religious love
In which I walked with Nature. But let this
Be not forgotten, that I still retained
My first creative sensibility ;
That by the regular action of the world
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
Abode with me; a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;
A local spirit of his own, at war
With general tendency, but, for the most,
Subservient strictly to external things
With which it communed. An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour ; the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye :
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
And hence my transport.

L. 343. Some jutting eminence : some hillock or rock. *L. 346-47. How shall I...I felt* : It was impossible for Wordsworth to find out where from his feelings of the moment cropped up and how it developed. *L. 348-350 Oft in these...utterly forgotten* : at such times, his heart was blessed with a seven and calm mood, the poet became totally forgetful of his body and his eyes—rather 'laid asleep in body'. But his soul was active and with his mind's eye he could have a view of something that was created by his own mind and was like a vision without a tangible shape. He became 'all soulness'. Is it not something like the 'Samadhi' of Vedanta ? *L. 362. A plastic power* : 'Creative sensibility' or visionary power. *L. 363-64. At times...devious mood* : this visionary power was not always at the beck and call of the poet ; it sometimes acted in an erratic way. *L. 367. Subservient* : subsidiary, or of secondary importance. *L. 368.*

I would sit by myself among the woods on some projecting hillock when only the first rays of the dawn were visible and when the lonely vale still seemed to be in peaceful slumb.r. It is impossible for em to seek the starting point and find out the source from where those wonderful feelings and experiences cropped up at that time. Often, at such times a sacred quietness would pervade my soul and I would completely lose the sense of my body and bodily-eyes ; and then whateverw as visibleto me seemed to be something within myself, something vague like a dream and seen with only mind's eye.

Lines : 352 to 375 : In those days I had a close communion with Nature with a sense of deep religious love whenever I moved in the midst of lovely scenes. It would take a long time to narrate in detail how I gathered inspiration from the changing seasons of spring, autmon, winter with snow, summer with its shade, from day and night, morning and evening, sleep and waking and from thoughts sources of my inspiration never failed me and fed and strengthened my religious spirit of love for nature. But this should never be forgotten that I still retained the creative sensibility of my earlier days. My regular contact with the work-a-day world could not tame or weaken the power of my soul. I had in me a creative sensibility, a shaping power which sometimes seemed to be rebellious and at other times to be acting in an erratic mood. It was nothing but a local spirit in conflict with the general tendency, but it was very often strictly subordinate to external objects with which it was in communion. A light or visionary power emanated from my mind and added new glory and grandeur to the beauty of the setting sun. The same light again bestowed some added glory to the sweet-singing birds, the rustling breeze, the flowing fountains babbling to one another. Even the midnight storm would go darker and violent touched by that light from my eyes. And this inner light was really responsible for all my homage, my worship and my ecstatic delight.

Auxiliary light : visionary power, 'plastic power'. *L. 375. Obeisance* : salution. *L. 376. Transport* : ecstatic delight ; obeisance, devotion, and transport—all are the outcome of the 'auxiliary light'.

Nor should this, perchance,
Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved
The exercise and produce of a toil,
Than analytic industry to me
More pleasing, and whose character I deem
Is more poetic as resembling more
Creative agency. The song would speak
Of that interminable building reared
By observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come;
And, whether from this habit rooted now
So deeply in my mind, or from excess
In the great social principle of life
Coercing all things into sympathy,
To unorganic natures were transferred
My own enjoyments; or the power of truth
Coming in revelation, did converse
With things that really are; I, at this time,
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul.
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not

L. 383. Interminable building: ever continuing process; 'building' stands for the poet's love for Nature. *L. 383-386. Reared by sympathy*: The poet would observe similarity or affinities among different objects of nature; but this could not be realised by persons devoid of the creative sensibility. *L. 387. This habit*: The habit of seeing affinities in various objects of nature. *Ll. 388-92. From excess...enjoyments*: We all have a social feeling of gregarious unity and this feeling urges us to live together. The poet felt it with greater intensity. Hence he shared his own enjoyments with other objects of nature and transferred his own emotions to all inanimate things. *L. 391. Unorganic*: inanimate. *L. 397. Saw blessings-sea*: felt himself surrounded by profusion of blessings. *Ll. 398-99. That all feeling*: Even his thoughts were drenched in feelings, *that is*, thoughts and feelings were merged into one and he became a creature of feeling. *Ll. 401-2. I felt-still*: This is Wordsworth's mystic experience, the feeling of all

Lines 376—418 : Perhaps this should not be left unrecorded. I still loved the exercise and the outcome of labour which was more pleasing to me than the work of analytical reasoning. To me the former seems to be more poe ic in nature as it is related to more creative activity. My song would now speak about the ever-continuing process (of love for nature) which was strengthened by observing affinities among objects of nature ; such similarities as cannot be perceived by minds devoid of creative sensibility. I was then seventeen, either because of my deeply-rooted habit (of observing affnities in objects of nature) or because of my excessive faith in the social feelings of gregarious unity that makes all objects of nature interrelated, I transferred all my pleasures and feelings to all inanimate object or shared these emotions with them, or the power of truth came to me with an impact of revelation and conversed, as it were, with the real objects of nature. At this stage of life I felt I was surrounded by profusion of blessing (of joy in Nature). Thus with the passing of days and years I received so much from Nature with her over-flowing soul that all my thoughts were dominated by or saturated completely with feelings. I was really happy when I felt the sentiment of Being with a mystic bliss, spread over all things, animate or inanimate, over all things which are beyond the comprehension of our thoughts and knowledge and invisible to the physical eye, but still existing so far as our feelings are concerned ; over all creatures whose movements are full of life and joy, over creatures that fly in the sky (bird-kingdom) ; over all that moves under the waves, even in the waves and in the very depth of the sea. There was nothing surprising.

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soulness-a feeling that his soul permeated the whole of the universe. This is the fourth or final stage of Wordsworth's love for Nature. *L. 407. Beats the gladsome air* : means bird-kingdom. *Ll. 407-8. All that the wave* : means fish-kingdom.

If high the transport, great the joy I felt
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible, then, when the fleshy ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed

If this be error, and another faith
Find easier access to the pious mind,
Yet were I grossly destitute of all
Those human sentiments that make this earth
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
That dwell among the hills where I was born.
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
With God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires—
The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
If, 'mid indifference and apathy,
And wicked exultation when good men
On every side fall off, we know not how,
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
Of peace and quiet and domestic love.
Yet migled not unwillingly with sneers
On visionary minds if, in this time
Of dereliction and dismay. I yet
Despair not of our nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith,

Ll. 415-18. One song...undisturbed: It seemed to the poet that all the beings, all the objects of the universe sang the self-same song. This is realisation of unity in diversity. And this song of 'all soulness' cannot be heard with our physical ears but it is to be realised with our mind and soul. *L. 419. If this be error*: The poet indirectly asserts that this belief cannot be wrong. *L. 430. Pious mind*: religious man. *Ll. 421-23. Yet-So dear*: if the poet failed to express his gratefulness to Nature, it would mean that he was lacking in all the human feelings and emotions that make our earth lovely and dear to us. *L. 430. With God-communing*: establishing a spiritual intercourse with God and Nature with a feeling of and with a realisation of unity in diversity. *L. 432. The gift is yours*: for all the greatness and goodness acquired by the poet in his life, he is completely indebted to the influences exerted on him by the lovely or sublime sights and sounds of Nature. . *Ll. 432-33. If in these...overthrown*: here is a

If I felt an ecstatic delight by communing with every form of creature on the earth or in the sky-creatures that looked up to the Creator with a deep sense of love and adoration. It seemed all these beings sang the same song and this song could be heard distinctly only when my bodily ear overcome by the beginning of the mystic music forgot her physical functions and became absolutely inactive like one falling fast asleep.

Lines : 419—451. This faith of mine may be wrong and some other belief may be more acceptable to men with religious bent of mind ; still, if I fail to speak with abundant gratefulness to the noisy water falls, mountains, lakes and the mists and winds whose abode is among the hills where I was born, I would be shamefully devoid of all finer human feelings that make our world such a lovely and lovable place. If in my youth I have been pure in heart, if, in spite of my constant mixing with the dusty world, I am satisfied with my own modest pleasure of life and have lived with spiritual intercourse with God and Nature without giving into petty jealousies and mean desires, it is all due to the gracious influence of the objects of Nature. If during this period of horror (aroused by the French Revolution) with its depressing feeling due to the disappointments of great hopes, if in the midst of absolute lack of interest and indifference and a sense of elated victory of the wicked when good men stray away from the right path without any rhyme or reason and submits to selfishness and justify it giving it some pleasant names like peace, quiet and love for the family and ridiculing people with cherished ideals if at such times of terror and failure in discharge of duty, I do not fall a prey to despair regarding the ultimate good of human nature but retain a robust Roman confidence, a never-failing faith

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reference to the failure of the spirit and ideals of the French Revolution that brought about a distressing feeling of dejection and disappointment even among so many men of importance. Wordsworth might have remembered Coleridge's suggestion on third point mentioned in one of his letters. *L. 441. Dereliction* : failure in the discharge of his duty. *L. 44*'. *Despair not of our nature* : Do not lose faith in the goodness of human nature. *L. 443. Roman confidence :* Indomitable courage and unflinching self-confidence for which the ancient Romans were famous.

That fails not, in all sorrow, my support,
The blessing of my life—the gift is yours,
Ye winds and sounding cataracts ! 't is yours,
Ye mountains ! thine, O Nature ! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations ; and in thee,
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion.
Thou, my Friend ! wert reared
In the great city, 'mid far other scenes :
But we, by different roads, at length have gained
The selfsame bourne. And for this cause to thee
I speak, unapprehensive of contempt,
The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
And all that silent language which so oft
In conversation between man and man
Blots from the human countenance all trace
Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought
The truth in solitude, and, since the days
That gave thee liberty, full long desired,
To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been
The most assiduous of her ministers ;
In many things my brother, chiefly here
In this our deep devotion.
Fare thee well !
Health and the quiet of a healthful mind
Attend thee ! seeking oft the haunts of men,
And yet more often living with thyself,
And for thyself, so haply shall thy days
Be many, and blessing to mankind.

Ll. 447-451. Thou hast fed purest passion : Nature has always reinforced poet's lofty thoughts and deep meditations and has strengthened his purest emotions and passions. It has brought solace to his pained heart and restless soul. It has also been a source of supreme joy in times of stress and storm. *L. 454 Great city* : London. *L. 453. By different roads* : Coleridge brought up in the city and Wordsworth in the lap of nature. *L. 452. The self-same bourne* : One and the same goal ; here it means love of and faith in nature for both of them. *L. 456. The insinuated—tongues* : contempt or jeers hinted directly or indirectly by timid and cowardly fellows. *L. 459-460. Blots of love* : such contempt and scorn may efface all traces of love and beauty from our heart. *L. 464. The most—ministers* : Coleridge, has been very diligent and enthusiastic in his deep devotion to Nature. *L. 465-66. In many things...deep devotion* : Both the friends were bound to each other by many ties; but the most important and principal bond between them was that both Coleridge and Wordsworth were deeply devoted to Nature-rather the most enthusiastic and diligent priests in the temple of Nature.

that helps me to overcome sorrows and misfortunes and has turned out to be solaced and blessing of my life, this is also due to the gracious inflence of Nature with its winds, the noisy waterfalls and lofty mountains. Nature has always reinforced my lofty thoughts and meditations, has strengthened my purest passions and has also been a source of solace and joy for my troubled and distressed soul.

Lines 452-470 : My friend (Coleridge), you were brought up in the great city (London) in the midst of absolutely different scenes, but, though we had to travel by different roads we have reached one and the same goal. And it is only for this reason that I am speaking to you without expecting any scornful remark from you, without being afraid of any sort of scorn or jeers, hinted directly or indirectly, from timid and cowardly people and such other unexpressed but clearly discernible remarks that efface all traces of beauty and love from human face. You have also tried to seek truth in loveliness and ever since the days that brought you liberty you have keenly desired to be a great worshipper in the temple of Nature and have been very diligent in your devotion. We have been bound by many ties of kinship, but the chief bond of kinship between us is that both of us are equally diligent in our devotion to Nature. I bid you farewell. May you be in good health enjoying the peace of a healthy mind. You have often sought human company, but more often you have preferred to live in solitude with your own thoughts and dreams. I wish you a long and happy life with the hope that your life would be a blessing to mankind.

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Explanations : "The Prelude" : Book II

1. But the time............languidly pursued (lines 48-54).

The sub-title of Book II and the very opening lines tell us that Wordsworth's main purpose in this book also is to retrace how is simple life of childhood days led him to love the beautiful sights and sounds of nature and also to trace the growth and development of his love of nature and its gracious influence on his mind and imagination.

The first period of poetic life of childhood days was in its infancy and was kept enthused and nourished by his beautiful and sublime sorroundings without any conscious effort on his part : "By nourishment that came unsought". The poet's life at Hawkshead school was still noisy and boisterious, full of exciting sports and pastimes. But the poet was growing up and slowly his attitude towards nature underwent some change. He then longed for some calmer and sober type of pleasures. If his games and adventures were not closely attached to lovely objects, 'the winning forms of Nature' he failed to derive the same pleasure from them. In Book I we found the boy not at all conscious of his sorroundings, but now he has a longing to play all his games in close proximity of Nature. Thus, we may consider this as the second stage in poet's growing awareness of Nature.

2. Thus were my............breathed with joy (lines : 175-88)

Often after a day's excited games and sports the poet and his companions would row back, first before the nightfall in their light boat (pinnace) over the shadowy lake in the lazy mood. Robert Green-wood, the musician of their party, left behind on a small island would sit alone on a rock and play upon his flute. At such hours the quiet scene with the softly gleaming water of the lake filled his soul with a serene pleasure and the world seemed to be bathed in a dream-like beauty. In this way the poet's sympathies and spiritual

powers widened and familiar and common objects of nature became dearer to him day-by-day.

He then began to love the sun not for its utilities, for its life-giving power, or because it was a symbol of the security of human life on earth, but because it bathed the hills in its radiant beauty at dawn and touched the western hills with its golden fingers before it sank behind the dark horizon. Such glorious sights filled his soul with supreme joy and due to overwhelming happiness even his blood seemed to flow in his veins sheer pleasure of its own.

3. Those incidental.........her own sake (lines : 198-203).

Wordsworth has already told us how he loved the sun and the moon for their sheer beauty and grandeur and now the glorious sight overwhelmed his soul with supreme joy and happiness.

In these lines the poet elucidates another great change in his attitude towards Nature. In earlier years of life nature held a secondary position. He loved the beautiful objects of nature because they were the background of his sports and pastimes. But as he grew up, this attachment became weaker day by day. But now Nature attracted him because of her own inherent appeal and 'was sought for her own sake'.

We may call this rather the third stage in the growth of poet' love for Nature. In the beginning of the second Book the poet has already spoken about the second stage.

"......When the winning forms of Nature were collaterally attached to every scheme of holiday delight." That is, in the second stage he derived pleasure only from those sports and pastimes that were connected with the pleasing objects of nature. But now Nature became the principal object of his quest and interest.

4. Hard task.........Hath no beginning (lines 228-32)

These lines are addressed to Coleridge. Just after telling us about another great change in his attitude towards, Nature the poet digresses into some philosophical observations. Here he is trying to elucidate a transcendental theory of knowledge. He decries the attempt to analyse human mind by applying rules of geometry. It is beyond our power to trace a thought or feeling to its precise origin. To him human mind is not a mechanism but an organism and an organ is a consciousness whole which can be apprehended only in the imagination. Scientific analysis is often prone to error, and reason is hostile to imagination. It is beyond us to analyse even our rational thoughts and ideas, so it will be absolutely futile and foolish to analyse our emotions and imagination. The poet ends by expressing a firm hope that his friend will understand and appreciate his point of view that our mind can never be divided and sub-divided into water-tight compartments.

6. **Thence did I drink......something to pursue (lines 311-22).**

Wordsworth has already told us in the previous lines that during this period his mind lay open to more delicate and pleasing influences of Nature and he could have a more intimate contact with her. Living things, changing seasons and the enchanting beauties of nature had so much fascination for him that even solitude became 'best society' for him. Often, walking alone under the star-lit sky he realised the power of sounds unmarred by any visible sight.

All these sublime sights and sounds of nature engendered in him an exalted and ecstatic mood, and thence did the poet drink the 'visionary power' the power of creative imagination. That is, the poet imbibed every thing from Nature and of Nature. So, these lines give us an idea of Wordsworth's mysic experience from his ennobling and ecstatic contact with Nature. But these passing moods of mystic delight were never without some benefit. They were of importance not because they were related to our spiritual or intellectual life, but for the reason that the poet's soul remembering how it gathered its past experiences retained some vague feelings regarding the possibility of the existence of an ideal world ; and his soul aspired for this more and more with its growing and maturing faculties. To whatever extent might his faculties develop and whatever might be the level of their attainment, he had always feeling that still there was something more to aspire and attain.

Of in these............A prospect in the mind (Lines 348-52) : In these lines also Wordsworth tells us of his mystic experience amidst the bright and beautiful sights of nature. Not only in the midst of gloomy and noisy scenes but also among lovely and serene aspects of nature the poet had had a feeling of the existence of a visionary power or creative sensibility. A realisation that there was unity and harmony underlying all the diversities of nature came to him like a revelation.

In those days, Wordsworth often used to leave his cottage very early even before the little thrush started its springtime matins. He used to sit by himself on some projecting hillock when the lovely valley seemed to be still lying in a deep and peaceful slumber. At such times a serene and sacred quietness pervaded his soul and he would completely lose the sense of his physical existence and of his bodily eyes. After that whatever was visible seemed to be something within himself, something vague and indistinct like a dream and seen only with the mind's eye. Is not this blissful mystic experience of the poet-priest of Nature very much akin to that of 'Samadhi' mentioned in our 'Vedanta' ? After such deep and inexplicable experience the poet developed rather a religious or spiritual love towards Nature. This may be taken as the final or fourth stage of Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature. In some of the lofty lines of *Tintern Abbey* also we find the poet in the same mood.

5. For feeling.........which it beholds (lines 255-60)

Here also, in a high philosophic mood the poet makes a few observation on 'the infant babe' and the child-mind. The central and attractive force of his mother's love that seems to spread through his veins and the close link with his mother help the child to establish a relationship with his new world and he becomes-'An intimate of this active universe.'

To Wordsworth the child seems to possess the faculty of creative imagination. Feeling has endowed the infant with power which is unison with the developing faculties of the sense creations. It works as it were, like an agent of God's mind. The child's mind does not see and study an object as consisting of diverse elements. Whatever is perceived by his senses is transformed into one whole. Hence the child may be regarded as a receiver as well as a creator. So childhood is, in truth, the first stage of the poetic spirit in human life. As in "Immortality Ode", here also we may find the influence of Greek philosophers, Plato and Pythagoras on Wordsworth. These lines also remind us that the soul of a man comes into this world from its heavenly abode :

> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and became a living soul :
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things (Lines 45—50).

(8) An auxiliary light.........hence my transport (Lines 368-76)

Wordsworth has already told us that he used to move in the midst of lovely scenes of nature with a sense of religious love and this was led and strengthened by the changing seasons of nature with its sunshine and snow, with its cool shade and heavy showers, with all its greenery and vernal grandeur, day in and day out, from month to month, from year to year. The poet also retained his creative power or sensibility of his early years.

In those days a light or visionary power emanated from his soul and added new glory and granduer to the beauty of the setting sun and a fresh charm to the sweet melody of the birds, the rustling breeze or the running fountains softly babbling to one another. Even the midnight storm would seem more violent touched by that inner light from his soul. And his inner light by imparting a fresh charm to all the objects of nature was really responsible for all his devotion to them, for all his ecstatic joys that he derived from them. Herein lies the creative faculty of imagination, the poetic faculty *par excellence.*

(9) Wonder not.........and slept undisturbed (Lines 409-18)
Wordsworth was then just seventeen. At this time he received so much from Nature with her overflowing soul that all his thoughts 'were steeped in feeling' and he saw blessings spread around him 'like

a sea'. He was really happy when he felt 'the sentiment of Being' spread over all things, animate or inanimate, visible or invisible, in this universe.

Thus there was no element of surprise if the poet then felt supreme joy or bliss by communing with every form of creatures or objects of nature on earth or in the sky-creatures that looked up to the Creator with a deep sense of love and adoration. It seemed all these beings sang the same song—a realisation that a common thread of harmony ran throughout the entire creation. It seemed to the poet that he could hear that 'one song' distinctly only when his bodily ear over-whelmed by this mystic music forget her physical function and became absolutely inactive. That is only the spirit or mind of the poet became aware of the one and the same life shared by all the creatures of this universe.

These few lines along with the foregoing lines point out the four important stages in the development of the poet's mind. Firstly, there is a feeling of joy at the very sight of nature. In the second stage there grows a belief in him that there is life in nature and in all her objects. Thirdly, he has a feeling that there is one and the same life in all things. Finally, the poet observes affinity in objects—affinity that is related to creative power and opposed to the reasoning or analytical faculty.

(10) If in this tir e.........the gift is yours (Lines 439 to 44)
The poet now expresses his deep sense of gratefulness to the various forms and objects of nature. From his very childhood Nature has fostered and nurtured his mind and senses, has been a safe guide to wisdom and goodness.

The poet here refers to the period of horror and great disappointment after the sad failure of the French Revolution. Great hopes regarding the future of mankind were aroused by the French Revolution. But it failed miserably and all the high hopes were dashed to the ground. A period of distress and dejection followed. Good and honest men strayed away from the right path and became a prey to selfishness and egotism and started ridiculing people with cherished ideals. Even during such a period of horror and depression, a period when even honest persons failed to discharge their duties properly, the poet never lost his faith and courage but was able to retain his robust confidence like the ancient Romans in the ultimate good and greatness of humanity. If he was really able to do so, it was all due to the benign influence of gracious Nature with its high winds, 'sounding cataracts' lofty mountains and many other lovely and sublime sounds and sights.

Note : Coleridge in one of his letters to Wordsworth suggested that he should write a poem addressing 'to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have given up all hopes of amelioration of mankind,.........It would do great good, and might form a part of the *Recluse*'' While writing these lines the poet might have this suggestion from this friend in his mind.

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Select Literary Criticism : "The Prelude" : Book I and II

(1) **Helen Darbishire** : "*The Prelude* represents the height of Wordsworth's poetic achievement in one direction. It is a long poem, and a great poem, conveying high meditation on a basis of personal experience. It has a unity of design which depends upon the essential integrity of its subject. That subject is not 'My Life', but 'The Making of a Poet'. Its virtue lies in its power to express Edward Irving, speaking of Wordsworth in one of his sermons, called 'The deep unfathomable secrecies of human thought'. The instrument he used for this purpose was a kind of blank verse, familiar yet impassioned, which could rise with a natural ease from simple personal narrative to exalted meditation."

(2) **Emile Legouis** : "Destined never to write more than mere fragments of it (i.e. *The Recluse*) he began with *The Prelude* in which he analysed the growth of his poetic genious during his childhood and youth and recalled the lessons he owed to Nature, his first and greatest teacher."

(3) **Oliver Elton** : "*The Prelude* is laid out not unlike an epic, with episodes and vicissitudes and a climax, in fourteen books. It is skilfully ordered for its purpose, for it begins at the end ; the poet, at the age of twenty-nine, is now safe in heaven, and relates his long past voyage of the soul and imagination."

(4) **Herbert Read** : "Its greatness does not consist in its autobiographical veracity. It is not a true poem in that sense. Rather it is a deliberate mask. It is an idealisation of the poet's life not the reality (in Wordsworth)."

(5) **Ernest De Selincourt** : "As it stands, *The Prelude* has not merely unity of design ; it has something of structure."

(6) **Dobson** : "*The Prelude* is Wordsworth's message to mankind and this message is the attainment of a noble and just life

through the contemplation of nature, in which, as in man, the Infinite stands revealed."

(7) **W. Graham** : "His method, if that is the right word, is to trace the growth of an experience with such particularity that he recreates in the reader the emotional state of the boy who is living it, so that the reader himself, in the process of sharing the experience, learns something of Wordsworth's feeling of intimacy, with natural objects and follows the growth of the poet's mind."

(8) **Herbert Read** : *The Prelude* is the greatest poem of Wordsworth. It puts before us a panorama of Wordsworth's various stages of poetic career. Beginning from the recollections of his early childhood, ending with his philosophic approach to Nature and God, the poem enshrines within itself the entire cult of Wordsworthism...... *The Prelude*, undoubtly, places before us Wordsworth—the revolutionary ; Wordsworth—the man ; Wordsworth—the poet : and finally Wordsworth—the high priest of nature."

(9) **Abercrombie** : "It is a story of universal significance of which Wordsworth's own unique experience is offered as the type. It is the story of mind, greatly conscious of its own enigma, gradually establishing its secure relationship with a world equally enigmatic... This is the modern epic : this is the heroic strain of to-day, the great theme of man's experiences ; and grandly *The Prelude*, its first enunciation."

William Wordsworth

THE PRELUDE

BOOK I AND II